UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

The Function of Radio Drama: An Alberta Perspective

BY

Steven H. Olson

(C)

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

DEPARTMENT OF DRAMA

Edmonton, Alberta

FALL 1991

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ISBN 0-315-70214-1

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DEGREE: **Master of Arts**

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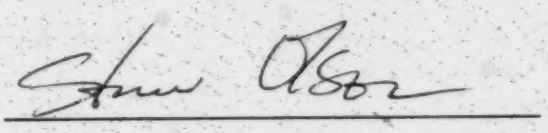

Box 7, Site 310, RR3

Stony Plain, AB

T0E 2G0

October 11, 1991

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled **The Function of Radio Drama: An Alberta Perspective** submitted by **Steven H. Olson** in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of **Master of Arts** in **Drama**.

John A. Hawkins

James DeFelice

M. Dale Wilkie

October 7, 1991

This work is dedicated to two great broadcasters
who passed suddenly in 1991

George Henry Payne

January 7, 1926 - August 9, 1991

Norm Edwards

October 11, 1942 - September 25, 1991

Abstract

Radio drama was an important aspect of the broadcast industry from 1929 into the 1950s. This thesis explores the business of radio drama with a specific focus on the plays which were written, produced, and broadcast in the province of Alberta. The business of broadcasting is placed into its historical perspective in the introduction. Members of the Alberta radio and radio drama communities, including Clarence Mack, Doug Homersham and Elsie Park Gowan, are discussed in the chapter "Radio Drama: An Alberta Perspective". A discussion of ratings, the audience, and the stations which were available to Alberta listeners is explored in the chapter "Radio Drama: A Business of Perspective". Finally, in the chapter "Radio Drama: Perspective of a Writer", is a detailed discussion of Alberta writer Elsie Park Gowan.

This thesis helps to identify the drama which emanated from Alberta during the golden age of radio and dispels the myth that little or no drama originated outside of the three major CBC production facilities. The work of a few qualified and dedicated individuals helped to assure that a consistent amount of quality radio drama was available to Alberta, Canadian and international audiences.

Preface

I first became interested, or perhaps intrigued, with radio at a very early age. Before we had a television (I think we were one of the last on the block to get one), our source of inside-the-home entertainment came from the radio, of which we had two: a large one for the living room, and a small table-top model which resided in the kitchen. Trying to figure out how the music and voices arrived in our home provided me with many hours of trance-like meditation. My mother tells me she could put me in a room with a radio on, and I would sit there for hours. Little did she know I was trying to solve an incredible mystery.

My first thought, which I later discovered was not uncommon, was that very small people resided in the box, and that if I turned on their light, they would start to talk and play songs. Turn off their light, and they would go to sleep. And since both of our radios had dial lights which came on when the radio was turned on, it seemed a legitimate theory until one day when both radios were on at the same time, and the people's voices were coming out of both radios simultaneously. This meant a change in perspective, and soon developed into theory number two: we must have a direct link to the source of sound. I rationalized, then, that the cord plugged into the wall must be the direct link to the place where the people were. I had seen, or more accurately heard, two tin

cans connected by a string transfer a voice from one tin can to another. Using that as a foundation, it made perfect sense that all of those cables outside of our house must lead a direct path to the source of the music and talk. I decided to test my theory one afternoon, and tune myself in with a small, sharp, metal object. I was shocked, and rather disappointed, to discover that the two-holed socket in the wall was not the direct line to the radio station.

Some months later, I sheepishly asked my Dad, how the music got into the little box on the table. He told me, in a way he felt my pre-school mind could understand, that the radio station sent out an invisible signal, which our radio could understand and turn into music. During that conversation he might as well have explained the theory behind super-heterodyne transceivers and the differing patterns created by amplitude and frequency modulation for the amount I actually understood. The theory of invisible signals did not satisfy my curiosity, but it did instill in me a sense of wonder and mystery, which still exists to this day, even though I now understand how radio works, and can explain to my dad the theory behind amplitude and frequency modulation.

As I continued to grow, my love of radio grew with me. For many years, especially through my teens, the radio was one of my closest companions. On the farm I always carried a radio, which in many ways was my friend, whether I was milking the cows or out in the fields. The announcers, many of whom I

never saw or talked to, became close associates. The music became etched in my mind, and when I hear those songs now, years later, I am able to identify places and people, and even which field I was cultivating, or which barn I was painting when I first heard them.

Even though I missed what is referred to as the golden age of radio, with its plethora of radio drama, I found, in the various programs I listened to, my own golden memories, which included much exercise for my imagination. In the early 1970s, Edmonton radio station CHED ran a daily serial called *The Adventures of Chicken Man*, about a super-hero, dressed as a chicken, who always found himself in compromising situations. May I never forget "Bak Bak Bak Bak, Chiiiickennnn Maaaannnn!" This program became a much-anticipated part of the day for me, as well as for a large number of other faithful listeners. Although a short-lived feature, this two-minute mini-play was my first introduction to what I later learned was called radio drama. I was even more pleased when I found out a long legacy of radio drama was produced, written, and broadcast in Canada, and in Alberta. I have since then read many of those old scripts, and have been able to listen to many of the old popular radio dramas which occasionally show up on cassette-tape collections.

My fascination with the radio instilled in me a desire to be a part of that particular medium. In January 1976, just three days out of high school, I entered the broadcast

industry as a radio announcer, later turning my attention to music-directing, computer-assisted music programming, and program directing. That early desire to discover how the voices got into the box has led me to a successful professional broadcasting career in commercial radio. It is my love for the history of my craft, however, and my admiration of the early pioneers in the field of broadcasting, which has led me to this thesis.

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the important individuals and organizations who have helped to bring this project to its fruition. Dr. John A. Hawkins, for his interest, efficiency, and dedication as supervisor and friend. Jim DeFelice and Dale Wilke for their guidance and support. Doug Cass and the staff at the Glenbow Museum Archives in Calgary, Liz Bishop and the staff at Ryerson Polytech in Toronto, the University of Alberta Archives, the University of Calgary Special Collections, the Provincial Archives, the University of Alberta Inter-Library Loans department, Moira Day, and my colleagues at the University of Alberta for their friendship and support. Finally to Libby for dedication above and beyond the call as well as the numerous readings she has endured during the early drafts. May you all find happiness and peace.

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List of Abbreviations

C.P. CJCA Players

GPR Gwen Pharis Ringwood

PI Personal Interview

PS Personal Scrapbooks

RW Radio Workshop

Introduction: A Historical Perspective

One hundred years ago, the idea of sending information from one location to another without the use of wires was a distant dream. However, there were at that time, a select few who felt the dream could become a reality. One such individual was Guglielmo Marconi who, in 1896, successfully sent morse code signals by wireless transmission with experiments in the United Kingdom. In 1901 Marconi sent a transatlantic morse code signal, and within three months was offered $80,000 from the Canadian government to continue his experiments. The Canadian government had seen the potential value of sending information to Britain via wireless and for their $80,000 investment were guaranteed cut-rate transmission costs should such a service become available.

Radio was principally founded on the assumption that it would provide the same service as the telegraph but without the wires. By 1903 a few radio stations had begun operating in Canada, the United States and abroad for the sole purpose of sending messages.

In the meantime Reginald Fessenden, a native of Sherbrooke, Quebec, was not satisfied with the technology being used by Marconi. Fessenden's idea was to send information in a continuous wave, similar to the ripples one sees after throwing a stone into a pond, instead of the sudden slaps of power Marconi was using. If Fessenden's idea proved

workable, it would mean the human voice, music, or any other sound source could be broadcast. Within four years of Marconi's 1896 United Kingdom experiments, Fessenden had successfully transmitted his own voice to his assistant's receiver a few miles away. He continued to experiment with this form of transmission and finally on December 24, 1906, from Brant Rock, Massachusetts, Fessenden let the world know about his developments. On that night, Fessenden broadcast Christmas greetings, a Bible recitation, a violin solo, as well as Handel's *Largo* from an Ediphone. The broadcast was heard by several radio operators on board nearby ships in the Atlantic. Although radio as we now know it was thus born, it would still be a number of months after Fessenden's Christmas Eve program before the concept of information and entertainment using real voices would be a viable option. It would also take a disaster and a war to propel radio into the forefront of technology and into a greater level of importance to the public.

The primary use for the wireless in the early years was for communication with ships. For this reason, the control of radio in Canada first fell to the Department of Marine and Fisheries. Ironically, it was on the ocean that disaster struck, sending radio to new heights. Sandy Stewart in his *Pictorial History of Radio in Canada* claimed that when the Titanic sank "it marked the end of one era and the beginning of another, a time when radio would be recognized as a medium

of communication of far-reaching importance." (11) Stewart recognized the use of radio before 1912 as commercial, and "used primarily for shipping." (11) As the value of radio communications increased, ships were more often being rigged with the new technology, so that by 1912 it was standard equipment. It was that equipment, and the messages sent out from the *Titanic*, that saved the lives of 711 of the 2,224 people on board. Stewart also points out, "on the rescue ship Carpathia the low-powered radio was again used to send the horrifying news of the disaster to the mainland." (12) Around the world the importance of wireless suddenly became very clear.

In his *Documents of Canadian Broadcasting* Roger Bird referred to a conference which was held in London a few months after the *Titanic* disaster. The London Convention and Regulations governing radio communication indicated there were

> many lapses in radio communication that dreadful night, lapses that doomed the ship. The near-by *Californian* tried for hours to warn the *Titanic* of the icebergs, but the *Titanic* operator was unwilling to break off his connection with Cape Race, Newfoundland to listen. When the *Titanic* went down, officers on the bridge of the *Californian* could see its rockets going off, but it occurred to no one to wake the radio operator to find out what was happening. Only the far-distant *Carpathia* heard the *Titanic's* SOS. The conference was determined to end such irregularities and amateurism. (20)

The convention was signed in July of 1912 by 43 countries. It was ratified by 41, and followed by almost 100, and went into effect on July 1, 1913.

By the summer of 1913 war was looming in Europe, and

control of radio in Canada changed from Marine and Fisheries to Naval Services. In the United States changes were also made. With advances in broadcast technology continuing at a rapid pace, battles among various companies vying for patents had begun. These struggles ended when the United States "got involved in the First World War [and] seized control of all the radio patents." (Stewart, 13) Radio as a potential political tool was realized, especially under the format of broadcasting then in existence; that is, only to broadcast when one had information to transmit.

Although transmissions were usually geared towards commercial shipping, radio hobbyists had sprung up around the world, as early as 1904, and began talking to each other. Home-built radio receivers were common by 1915, which led to the next phase in the development of radio: a station to supply the growing number of listeners with a regular service. The first station to take on such a task was Marconi's station XWA (later CFCF) in Montreal which signed on in 1919. Their first scheduled broadcast was "a musical program relayed on May 20, 1920, ... to a meeting of the Royal Society of Canada in Ottawa." (Stewart, 15). In the United States station KDKA in Pittsburg began its regular broadcast days beginning with "the Harding-Cox presidential election returns on November 2, 1920" (Stewart, 15) to become the first regular service in that country. Regular radio service began showing up in other countries at about the same time. Within months, private

stations dotted the country, and began supplying local flavour to the broadcast industry.

T. J. Allard in his *Straight Up: Private Broadcasting in Canada: 1918-1958* pointed out that "nowhere in Canada did radio mania infect people as intensely as in the foothills province." (23) Allard had earlier stated:

> Canadian broadcasting developed more quickly on the Prairies than in any other region [because] the instant communication that wireless made possible was a benefit beyond value in that land of vast distances; poor roads; harsh winters; and a scattered population dwelling mainly on farms, or small rural settlements." (14)

E. Ross Stuart in *The History of Prairie Theatre* concured with Allard, and further claimed:

> In Western Canada in particular, radio replaced theatre in many people's lives. Radio provided convenient, economical information, entertainment, and culture; in effect, it became Canada's national theatre for many years. Radio conquered the difficulties of distance and weather, bringing entertainment to everyone. It also did not have to worry about bringing widely dispersed audiences together in one place -- it was available whenever a listener wanted it. (77)

Most listeners did want radio, although for a few this new technology was not welcome. Allard pointed out

> Every new development in a society creates fear; becomes a scapegoat for most ills, real or imagined. Broadcasting stations were often blamed for hailstones; for rain or the lack of it. At least on the Prairies, broadcasting stations received letters and phone calls from indignant ladies protesting that announcers were viewing them 'down the airwaves' in their bathtubs; or aggravating their arthritis; or had caused pregnancies alleged otherwise to be inexplicable. (Allard, 59-60)

Besides the select few who felt radio was an undesirable

element, the craving to be part of the crowd able to 'listen in' became the aspiration for most residents of Alberta, both rural and urban.

Allard pointed out that "even before 1914, Albertans were manufacturing not only home-made crystal receivers, but ingenious 'spark' sets for sending code by continuous wave." (23). At first, it was common to construct your own radio receiver. For many the simple crystal set was the simplest way to start receiving. Newspapers carried instructions on how to build a set which usually consisted of a round cardboard box wrapped with copper wire to form a tuning coil. One end of the wire was grounded, the other end attached to an antenna. A 'cat's whisker' (a small piece of wire about the size of a cat's whisker) was attached to a crystal and moved along the surface of the tuning coil. The other end of the crystal was attached to an earphone. This device required no electricity or tubes, and was usually successful in bringing in a few stations. For the more adventurous, tube sets offered better quality, and could more easily be attached to a loudspeaker so the entire family could listen in. One of the more adventurous was former CJCA producer, Doug Homersham, who remembers his first radios:

> When I was a little boy I built [my own] sets. First of all everybody builds a crystal set, or did at that time, then I built a five-tube peanut-tube set, which you don't see much of these days, peanut tubes are not available. ... Then I built two or three sets for my friends. [This was] when I was just trying to find out what radio was all about. ... The first station I ever listened to was KDKA

Pittsburgh. (Homersham, *PI*)

The technology behind tube sets, for many, was left to the professionals, which resulted in commercial sets becoming common as early as 1920. In *Voices of Alberta Radio Edmonton* it was noted that in 1922,

> Radio was a novelty ... it had just passed from the stage of experimentation and was definitely a marketable product. The demand for the new toy far exceeded the supply. Almost every newspaper carried columns of radio stuff; not program schedules but little tips about getting better reception, improving antennas, and so on. For a radio fan in Edmonton to get the Winnipeg radio station was an event worth chronicling. (12)

Picking up distant stations (DXing) became a hobby, or even a passion for many.

The purchase of a radio receiver was a major and exciting event for many early residents of rural Alberta. Robert J. Barnes, who was one of the first residents in the rural area outside of Edmonton, remembers two major purchases his family made circa 1920. The first was an automobile, the second was

> ...a De Forest Crossley two tube radio, complete with two sets of ear phones, which provided many nights of entertainment for ourselves and our neighbours. How thrilling it was to twist the dials and hear a voice say, "You are listening to radio K.S.L., Salt Lake City, Utah"; or to listen in the fall of the year, to the World Series baseball games over C.J.C.A., Edmonton" (*Along the Fifth*, p. 159)

"Listening-in parties" became a regular part of the daily and weekly activities for Alberta residents. Owning a radio receiving set also meant having a certain social status. An example of this is illustrated by four articles which appeared

in the February 12, 1924, personal and community news from a northern Alberta newspaper, *The Northern Review*:

> On Saturday night Dr. McBride had his new radio outfit working and we had the pleasure of "listening in" for a short time. Portland Ore. and Calgary being heard very clearly ... Dr. McBride has promised to let us know late news of interest by him for publication in *The Review*. (1)

> If you think Golden Meadow is not up to date. If you doubt it, take a walk to the home of Mr. Henry Stanfords and you will notice two long posts, which indicate instalment of the wonderful radio. Get it going Harry, we are coming up some evening to enjoy a great play somewhere in Calamacoo. (5)

> The Misses C. McGowan, G. Johnston and F. Gardener and Mssrs. C. Crotty, O. Dennis, and J. Black were visitors at Mr. and Mrs. E. Martin's Friday night. They report the radio working fine. (5)

> Dr. McBride is the second in the Waterhole district to install a radio-phone. The set arriving last Saturday. E. J. Martin has had his radio working for a couple of weeks and it is giving wonderful satisfaction. (5)

The editors responsible for the first article quoted recognized the radio as more than just a source of entertainment. The paper was published weekly, and the news it contained was often days (even weeks) old by the time subscribers received their copies. The radio, however, changed that. On the front page of the February 19, 1924 edition, the editor wrote:

> Last night, at the invitation of Mr. Fred Craig[1], we "listened in" for news by radio for today's issue. ... Stories included: a judge shot in Winnipeg, a robbery in Seattle, the strike in England. Also heard a variety of musical selections. Next week we hope to be able to give news

[1] Craig was the owner of the hardware store, and ran regular advertisements in the newspaper selling "this new marvel" radio.

> items verbatim with the assistance of a shorthand writer.

For a number of months thereafter, a regular feature on the front page of *The Northern Review* was the news by radio. Radio, then, had become an essential service, and in 1924 there was a considerable amount of service from which to choose.

Roger Bird in his *Documents of Canadian Broadcasting* noted:

> In the early 1920s, the development of broadcasting was rapid and many-faceted. National corporations, churches, municipal governments, labor unions, and private individuals set up stations of varying technical expertise and programming quality. By 1923 there were 34 stations in Canada and more than 500 in the United States. (37)

A high percentage of the Canadian stations were in Alberta. Regular radio service began in Alberta in 1921 with CFCN, a 100-watt station built by W. W. Grant in High River. The station was relocated in 1922 to Calgary. Grant's initial service was followed in rapid succession by a number of stations. Many of them were put on the air by hobbyists, and remained active for only a few months. The stations which signed on in Alberta prior to 1930 are listed in the following table[2]. Of the stations listed only seven are still supplying regular radio service.

---

[2] The table uses the original call letters of each station. To avoid confusion here are the call signs which have changed over the years: CQCA was changed to CHQC, then to CFAC; CFCN now uses the call letters AM 106; CJTC was changed to CJCJ then in 1948 to CKXL, to CISS in 1987, and finally to CFXX in September 1991; CHMA was changed to CFTP in 1933, then later that year to CFRN.

Table I - Pre-1930 Radio Stations In Alberta

CALL	LOCATION	ON	OFF
CFCN	Calgary	1921	----
CQCA	Calgary	1922	----
CJCA	Edmonton	1922	----
CJNC	Calgary	1922	1925
CHBC	Calgary	1922	1925
CFCK	Edmonton	1922	1926
CJCX	Olds	1923	1925
CKCX	Calgary	1923	1925
CFHC	Calgary	1924	1925
CHCM	Calgary	1924	1925
CJCK	Calgary	1924	1925
CKLC	Calgary	1924	1925
CJOC	Lethbridge	1926	----
CJTC	Calgary	1927	----
CKUA	Edmonton	1927	----
CHMA	Edmonton	1928	----

Many stations in their early days shared air time, programs, and even frequencies. For example, old log books indicate that CFAC and CFCN in Calgary shared 690 kc. for several years after they signed on. One of the reasons behind the sharing of frequencies was that the "powerful U.S. stations had taken over all the best frequencies and only a few had been allotted to Canada." (*Voices*, 14) Sharing frequencies was not a problem in the early days, as stations seldom had enough programming material to fill an entire day,

which meant long hours of silence were common.

By 1923, listeners were required to obtain a license to receive radio signals. The first licenses were issued for the nominal fee of $1.00 per year. It took a few years before the regulation was regularly obeyed. In 1930 it was reported that

> For the first time since radio broadcasting commenced, more than 300,000 owners of receiving sets in Canada have paid the annual license fee of $1.00 this year. Of these just half are located in Ontario and over 40,000 are located in Toronto. Not all the people who own radio sets pay the dollar, in fact, it is known thousands dodge the tax. By provinces the number of licensed receiving sets is now as follows: Ontario, 146,662; Quebec, 49,790; Prince Edward Island, 509; Nova Scotia, 8,983; New Brunswick, 6,141; Manitoba, 18,728; Saskatchewan, 22,467; Alberta, 14,332; British Columbia, 25,981. (*Fairview Northern Review*, Feb. 7, 1930, p. 1)

By 1937 the number of persons paying the annual fee had increased to 1,100,000, which "yielded the C.B.C. a net revenue of $1,780,000 from the ... listeners who paid the annual levy." (*Financial Post*, Jan. 1938, p. 1)

There were usually four or five rules printed on the back of each license, some of which changed from year to year, and others which remained standard. For example, one of the rules found on the back of the 1925 license, which continued in more or less the same form through out the years, stated:

> The licensee shall not divulge to any person (other than the properly authorized officials of the Government or a competent legal tribunal) or make any use whatever of any message coming to the knowledge of the licensee and not intended for receipt by means of the licensed apparatus. This does not apply to broadcasted concerts or programmes addressed to the General Public.
>
> Regulation 105. Any person who violates any of the provisions of these regulations shall be liable

> on summary conviction to a penalty not exceeding fifty dollars and costs or three months imprisonment. (1925 radio receiving license)

Subtle changes continued to take place in the licenses to allow for the changing patterns of listeners. For example: the 1935-36 license allowed the licensee to use a radio at home and in a passenger automobile, yet in 1940 the license was revised to read:

> This license permits the installation and operation of one Radio receiving set only, and no person shall install or operate more than one Radio receiving set except under and in accordance with a license granted by the Minister in respect of such set.

If a listener, then, wanted to receive radio signals at home and in the automobile, two licenses were needed.

In 1932, the same year Canadian radio was nationalized, the license fee was increased to $2.00. In March of that year, an article appeared in the Edmonton based *Radioland Magazine*, which attempted to explain the rationale behind the doubling of the fee:

> While no official information is yet available, it is understood on good authority that the increase will be applied to a betterment of Canadian radio programs. A non-partisan Parliamentary committee is at present investigating the Canadian radio situation with a view to providing more and better broadcast programs for the Canadian listeners. It is expected that their recommendations, which will undoubtedly be adopted by Parliament, will be made public shortly. It is understood that the new licensing regulations are to be very stringently enforced and that all new licenses must be taken out within the period of grace allowed, i.e., 1st of April to 31st of April. (p. 1)

The license fees, as it turned out, were not solely applied to

the betterment of Canadian radio programs; instead they were enforced so tax payers would not bear the burden of a national network. By 1932, however, the quality of programs which were broadcast was an issue often addressed by broadcasters and the public. If one was required to pay for radio service then the quality of the programs heard on that radio should be worth paying for.

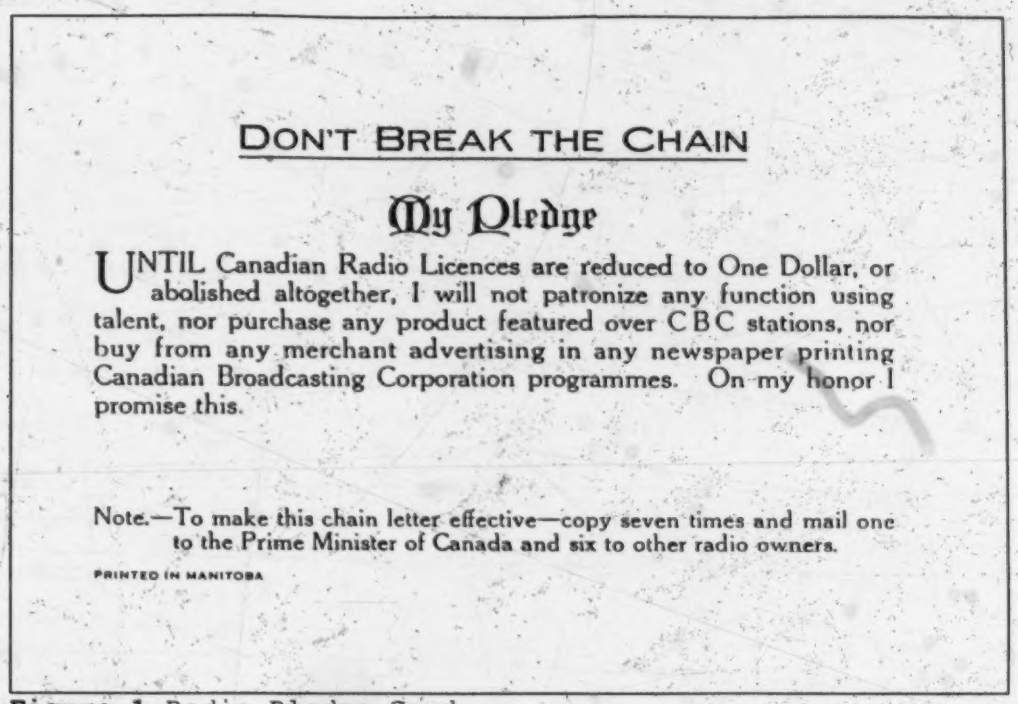
In 1938 the fee escalated to $2.50 per year. A newspaper article, which ran in February 1938, prior to the increase, stated:

> Apparently the government is firm in putting through the 50-cent increase in the $2 radio license fee, though some consideration is being given to the suggestion of Dr. T. F. Donnelly (Lib.), ... for a lower fee for battery sets. To Liberal members who have been protesting against the increase in license fees, it is pointed out that the existing act specifically states operating revenues of the corporation must come solely from fees levied and advertising receipts. Thus to subsidize the corporation, as some members have suggested rather than increase the license fee, is impossible under existing regulation. (*Calgary Herald*, Feb. 2, 1938, p. 1)

The proposed increase was not welcomed by many people. Don Campbell, news editor for CFCN Calgary, wrote and aired an editorial in February 1938, which said in part:

> Judging from the dozens of letters I have received during the past week, even the 50 cents is too much for many to bear when you consider that large numbers of our rural populations have to consider the cost of batteries frequently. (*CFCN Papers*)

The fee increase went ahead, regardless of battery consumption, and in the early 1950s a fee of $2.50 per year was still being collected. Prior to the receiving licence fee



DON'T BREAK THE CHAIN

My Pledge

UNTIL Canadian Radio Licences are reduced to One Dollar, or abolished altogether, I will not patronize any function using talent, nor purchase any product featured over CBC stations, nor buy from any merchant advertising in any newspaper printing Canadian Broadcasting Corporation programmes. On my honor I promise this.

Note.—To make this chain letter effective—copy seven times and mail one to the Prime Minister of Canada and six to other radio owners.

PRINTED IN MANITOBA

Figure 1 Radio Pledge Card

being discontinued, cards such as the one illustrated in Figure 1 were circulated around the country, in chain-letter style, in an effort to force the government to drop the levy.

Radio had become well established as an entertainment source by the 1950s but was also becoming something easily taken for granted. Other entertainments, such as live theatre, motion pictures, or concerts charged an admission fee. Radio, which supplied forms of all of the above as well as informative type programs, was expected to be given for free. During the time when fees were being collected radio came closer in nature to the other forms of entertainment with which it competed.

Regardless of the fees, radio became an essential part of

the day for most people in Alberta. The radio programmers took the increased listenership as a challenge and tried to fill the day with quality programs. In order to fill the quota, many stations started combining their resources, and small networks began to take shape. After 1932 the air time of the individual stations was shared with programmes originating from the national network. The Canadian Radio Broadcast Commission came into effect in 1932, followed by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation in 1936[3]. As a national corporation,

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[3] The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation came into existence in 1936 from the ashes of the short-lived Canadian Radio Broadcasting Commission. It does not seem unrealistic to find that a politically motivated, propaganda-based series of radio dramas played a part in the hasty formation of the Corporation. Prior to the 1935 federal election the Conservative Party sponsored a series of radio plays which were broadcast "over a network of private stations." (Bird, 133) The series was heard in September and October over CFRN in Edmonton and CFCN in Calgary, Saturday evenings from 8:15 to 8:30 p.m. The advertisements in both the *Edmonton Journal* and *Calgary Herald* read "Again! Mister Sage, A shrewd observer who sees through the pretences, knows the facts, and understands the true issues of the present political campaign, discusses the election with his friends." (*Edmonton Journal* Sept. 14, 1935, p. 7; *Calgary Herald*, Sept. 14, 1935, p. 9)

The Conservatives had hired a Toronto-based advertising firm to write the dramas which featured Bill, a young, inquiring, and politically attentive citizen, and Mr. Sage, the voice of reason and rationality. Through the dramas Mr. Sage would answer questions which were being asked "In every town, village, and cross-road of Canada" ultimately ending with an advancement towards the electing of the Conservative party:

> Sage: Exactly, Bill exactly, I'll back the common sense of Canadians every time. Bill, the whole country's going to do a lot of mighty hard thinking -- and soul-searching too -- before polling day. And there'll be just one answer --
>
> Bill: And that answer will be --?
>
> Sage: *Bennett*.
>
> MUSIC UP AND FADE
>
> Announcer: We will visit Mr. Sage again next Saturday night over this same national net-work of Canadian stations.

In the early episodes the Conservative Party failed to identify themselves as the sponsor and, as Bird observes, "all of this, plus the CRBC's permission for the special network, aroused fears in those who worried about propaganda from a broadcasting commission appointed by and

which not only produced its own shows and ran its own stations, the CBC was also the regulatory body for all broadcast ventures in Canada, including the already existing privately owned stations. As former CJCA producer Doug Homersham pointed out, however, the national regulatory body had some positive aspects to it. He says,

> I think you have to look at it in this light: whether you approve of all the CBC was doing or not, somebody had to start to develop radio, and one individual couldn't do it. There was no organized effort, outside of the CBC or the Canadian Radio Broadcasting Commission at that time. So I think it was a very necessary thing. (Homersham, *PI*)

Each station had a certain commitment to the CBC as to the number of hours of national programming they were to carry. For some programmers, the more nationally syndicated programs they could carry, the better. As Homersham pointed out, however, wanting to be a member of the CBC was not the goal of all broadcasters:

> I would say some did. I wouldn't say they all did by any manner of means. In fact some of them would have preferred to be in private radio instead of the CBC. There were commitments ... at the management level, for certain programs to be carried by the private stations for the CBC. There was quite a liaison that went on at that time, but I don't think it was any more than that. (Homersham, *PI*)

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responsible to the government of the day." (133). The broadcasts ended up being counterproductive for the Conservatives. Not only did they not win the election, but the CRBC, the Conservative brain-child, became defunct. In 1936 the Liberal government, under Mackenzie King, formed the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, which became not only the head of the national broadcasting network, but also the regulatory body for broadcasting in Canada.

One of the first new regulations the CBC brought forth was to ban "dramatized political broadcasts, and thus [preclude] the kind of difficulty 'Mr. Sage' had brought upon the CRBC." (Bird, 143)

After 1948 individual station commitments to the CBC started to become less. In 1948 the CBC completed construction on their fifth regional 50,000 watt station. The regional super-watters were installed for the purpose of carrying network programs. It would take a few years, however, for all of the national programming to be shifted back to the CBC.

Even while carrying CBC programmes, the private stations continued to carve out their own style and mannerisms. The choice of programmes, and what time of day they were aired, helped to establish each of the radio stations as a separate entity. Former CFAC producer Clarence Mack said:

> The role that radio has played since its inception has gone through varying changes from the early days of experimentation when even being able to receive a signal was considered an evening's entertainment, to today, when radio has become the most effective means of mass communication. Along the way, was the recognition that radio was a means of entertaining. (*CFAC 38th Anniversary Special*, 1960, p. 7)

Radio entertainment encompassed a variety of styles: music, lectures, news, sports, comedy, and drama, to name a few. It is through the drama that the medium was explored and developed to its fullest potential.

Radio drama became an important aspect of the broadcast day. From locally produced dramatic commercials promoting an upcoming event to internationally broadcast plays, drama was heard in some form in every broadcast day. Ross Stuart, Howard Fink, and others claim, quite accurately, that radio drama was Canada's national theatre. Many, especially those who were

involved in it, knew it only as a source of enjoyment, and a place to express themselves creatively. A number of radio performers originated from Alberta: writers, producers, actors, and technicians. A few went, like youth attracted to the circus, to join the ranks of the national corporation. Many others, however, satisfied with opportunities at home, stayed and helped to create a provincial theatre of the air.

Radio Drama: An Alberta Perspective

The history of radio drama has been explored in a few texts. The introduction to Howard Fink's *Canadian National Theatre on the Air, 1925-1961* contains a brief but concise history of radio drama in Canada, the United States, and abroad. Fink's submission "Radio Drama in English" in *The Oxford Companion to Canadian Theatre* expounds further the ideas explored in *Canadian National Theatre*, but with a more concise focus on Canada and the people involved. John Dunning has written *Tune in Yesterday: The Ultimate Encyclopedia of Old-Time Radio 1925-1976*, which is one of the most comprehensive sources of information concerning radio dramas produced in the United States. This book is important to an understanding of Canadian radio drama, as many of the programs were faithfully listened to by Canadian audiences. Information on radio drama in Britain, Australia, and North America is found in a collection of essays under the title *Radio Drama*, edited by Peter Lewis. Of use to Canadian researchers is the Howard Fink essay in *Radio Drama* entitled "The sponsor's v. the nation's choice: North American radio drama" which explores the similarities and differences in commercial radio between the United States (governed by the sponsor) and Canada (governed by state-owned broadcasting). There are, of course, many other excellent references to radio drama which usually focus on one aspect of broadcast theatre, such as the writers,

producers, actors, or the plays.

My intention in this chapter is not to rebroadcast all that has gone before (although some historical data will be necessary to place things in a proper perspective) but instead focus on an element of radio drama which has been dealt with only in superficial terms in the past: radio drama in Alberta. Radio drama was heard in Alberta by a large portion of the population. In 1930 14,332 radio licenses were issued to listeners in the province and by 1948 listenership had increased to 202,260[4]. Radio drama was also written and produced in Alberta by a few dedicated individuals. Those individuals, such as Sheila Marryat, Clarence Mack, Doug Homersham and Elsie Park Gowan, were not attempting to replace or surpass the types of dramas or quality of broadcasts heard nationally; instead, they were expressing themselves artistically though the medium of radio and at the same time becoming a vibrant part of the history of radio drama.

What is considered the first broadcast network in Canada was called the CNRB, and was organized by Canadian National Railways in an effort to supply radio programmes to their passengers on cross-Canada voyages. Howard Fink indicates "the first radio play in the CNRB schedules, *The Rosary*, broadcast over CNRA, Moncton, in May 1925, blanketed most of the Maritimes, penetrated far into New England, and reached across the Atlantic to Ireland." (in Lewis, 232). The following year

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[4] Based on the 1948 BBM survey for Alberta.

another of the CNRB stations, CNRV from Vancouver, started broadcasting a weekly production under the name of the *CNRV Players*. Fink summarizes Austin Weir, the head of the CN Radio Department, when he claims "more than a hundred radio dramas were produced on *CNRV Players* between 1927 and 1932 ... and from 1929 they were heard over the new CNRB network." (in Lewis, 233) Edmonton stations CKUA and CJCA were often members of the CNRB, picking up the network broadcast for transmission while the trains were within listening range of Edmonton. While it was possible, then, for Alberta audiences to hear plays broadcast from a local station, the first plays were being produced elsewhere. This changed at about the same time the CNRB network was finalized, when Sheila Marryat of CKUA organized the *CKUA Players* for the express purpose of producing drama in Alberta for an Alberta audience.

H. P. [Harold] Brown, the first announcer and studio manager of CKUA, outlined in a lecture entitled "CKUA 1927-1945" a brief history of the *CKUA Players* when he says,

> Miss Marryat was the only full-time member of the radio staff and as 'radio secretary' was program director, dramatist, lecturer, script writer and studio hostess. ... Miss Marryat organized the *CKUA Players* and many people well known in dramatic circles in Edmonton performed plays made famous by the B.B.C. in England written by DuGarge Peach who made them available to CKUA as an educational station. Among these 'actors' were Sid Lancaster[5], Harry Taylor, Farnham Howarth, H. E. Bronson, Charles Sweetlove, Les Pilcher, Dick Macdonald and others. Later, plays by Alberta writers Elsie Park Gowan and Gwen Pharis Ringwood were broadcast by

[5] Sid Lancaster later helped to pioneer television in Alberta.

the *Players*. (1-2)

Contributions from Alberta writers Elsie Park Gowan and Gwen Pharis Ringwood first happened for the series *New Lamps for Old* (1937). That series, along with *The Building of Canada* (1937-9), written entirely by Elsie Park Gowan, helped to establish CKUA and especially Marryat as a marketable commodity. The *Edmonton Journal* reported in 1939:

> Last year Dominion recognition of her efforts was received in the acceptance by the CBC of the University play series *New Lamps for Old* for its Western Network and this year the series, *The Building of Canada* has gone out from the University on a National Network. (Jan. 16, 1939, p. 9)

During the second season of *The Building of Canada* Marryat was asked to join the CBC at their Winnipeg studios. She remained in Winnipeg for a few years before she retired to Victoria. Prior to her leaving CKUA, the *Edmonton Journal* ran a short feature article on Marryat, which said in part:

> Her reward consists in the conviction that she is "doing a little something" for the women in rural districts. "I grew up in the country myself," she says, "and I know its loneliness. I feel that the radio programs must be some compensation to the women who have been plunged into country life, leaving their music, drama, and friends behind them." (Jan. 17, 1939, p. 12)

After Marryat's departure, production duties fell to Dick Macdonald and Elsie Park Gowan, among others. Gowan and Ringwood continued writing, Gowan almost exclusively for radio, Ringwood more for stage. Gowan did return occasionally to her first love of writing for stage, and Ringwood wrote periodically for the School Broadcasts originating from CKUA.

Besides those mentioned above by Brown, actors who took part on a regular basis included Myrna Hirtle, Francess Garness, Gavin Bright, Jack Delaney, and Inez Macdonald. Most of these actors were also involved in amateur theatre in Edmonton as members of the Edmonton Little Theatre. By necessity, actors who were involved in radio productions held other full-time jobs outside of the acting profession. Dick Macdonald, who joined CKUA as a full-time employee in 1938, was one of the few who worked in the field of broadcasting. Macdonald mentions:

> I was a member of the *CKUA Players* sometime before I started to work as an operator/announcer for the evening programs which started at six o'clock and ran through to 9.30 pm unless there was a play or other special event to be broadcast. I started the evening job in the fall of 1935, therefore when plays were scheduled they were part of my job. (Macdonald, *Letter to GPR*, April 1979)

As an operator, Macdonald's duties included maintaining proper levels and microphone quality, and assisting with or supervising the variety of sound effects and music cues required in the scripts. Macdonald reflects on those duties when he says,

> I made the first rainbox similar to the one used in the theatre and various other things like thunder sheets, sand tubs into which we could fire pistols loaded with blanks for gun shot. We also used H. P. Brown's developing room which was on the same floor as [the] studio, just to [the] right of the stair well. It had all kinds of running water gadgets that were great for plays which required sounds of voyageurs paddling canoes and getting caught in rapids etc. For the *Building of Canada* series and *New Lamps* we used as many as five turntables to feed in background music (yes we had a very fine Carnegie library of recordings which incidentally, included all the scores for the major works). (Macdonald, *Letter to GPR*, April 1979)

The *CKUA Players* were a group of dedicated actors and radio enthusiasts. Macdonald mentions "I could almost write a whole page describing some of the effects we experimented [with] to get just the right sound -- working hours after rehearsals into the small wee hours." (Macdonald, *Letter to GPR*, April 1979) The hours of dedication prior to 1937 began to pay off when the CBC requested the episodes from *New Lamps for Old* and the *Building of Canada* to be aired over their networks. Macdonald claims it was

> The first time any non-commercial station had ever had what was virtually an amateur radio group sending their productions over the CBC network. They paid the group the huge sum of $200.00 for each of the 26 plays in the two 13 play series. I had to draw up pay sheets so that each player even [though they only had to] bark like a dog, or cry like a child, received a fair percentage of the money. (Macdonald, *Letter to GPR*, April 1979)

Because of their ongoing non-commercial status, CKUA continued to receive assignments from the CBC. In the late 1940s, when the School Broadcasts began, CKUA was one of the predominant forces in educational radio drama in the country.

The station managers and employees of CKUA did not always want to remain a non-commercial venture. On numerous occasions, the station officials tried to acquire commercial status. In 1948, shortly after CKUA became the first Alberta station to start broadcasting simultaneously on the FM dial, Denny Brown reported:

> In Edmonton the boys running the provincial government's station, CKUA, apparently have taken an about-face. For years the government has complained bitterly that because the CBC continually refused

> to grant CKUA a licence, the station lost money and was unable to provide the kind of service it should. In the last copy of "Within Our Borders," the government's publicity sheet, is a story on CKUA which includes the following paragraph:
>
> Freedom from commercial commitments gives CKUA programs a flexibility which allows the station to take greater advantage of visiting talent and topical broadcasts of all kinds. The station can and does exercise a substantial influence on the calibre of entertainment and service offered to the general public. (*Calgary Herald*, Oct. 30, p. 5)

What came seemingly easy to CKUA -- that is, to have shows broadcast to a national audience -- was not as simple for some of the commercial stations. The large amounts of dramatic material produced in Alberta was usually broadcast locally, not nationally[6]. Doug Homersham reflects:

> There was a lot of different radio scripts being broadcast, dramatic scripts, school broadcast series, which was an excellent series ... on CKUA. There was a lot of it going on here, and more here than I would know went on anywhere else. (Homersham, *PI*)

Although CJCA's contribution to a national audience was minor, its service to local artists was great. The editors of *Voices of Alberta: Radio Edmonton* claim

> The *CJCA Players* had their beginning in 1943. Through training and hard work, the standard of this dramatic group developed for radio a high calibre of actor and actress, comparable to radio acting groups in Toronto, Winnipeg and Vancouver. Many hundreds of plays were produced in Edmonton by the *CJCA Players* and many hundreds of actors and actresses have received training and employment. (21)

The drama productions at CJCA began in earnest with the

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[6] Up until the 1950s it was very easy to receive a station originating from Alberta in almost the entire province. Therefore a "local audience" would include a considerable number of potential listeners.

arrival of Doug Homersham. Homersham began his radio career with a certificate from a technical school in Vancouver. With his training he was able to earn a living by building radio transmitters, which he did for stations such as CKMO in Royal Oak and CFJC in Kamloops. After a few years in the technical aspects of radio he applied his talent to radio production at CFJC. Homersham outlines his association with radio drama when he says,

> [In Vancouver] I took a course on voice training from a fellow from Montreal, and I became very interested in the aspects of public speaking. I didn't do anything about it at that time, but when I was in Kamloops I thought [about] some of those who encouraged me at that time [and thought] it would be a good opportunity, and probably an experiment, to set up a drama program. So we had what we called the *CFJC Drama Group*, and we used to get scripts in from the States and we produced them there. Then when I came to CJCA in Edmonton they wanted me to carry this on. As a matter of fact, I came to Edmonton toward the end of the last war, we were frozen during the war in radio, and I came to Edmonton and I did a series of programs under the title of *Welcome American*. One of the American officials [who] was stationed here at that time worked with me to produce the series. [I] went from there to Winnipeg, under an arrangement with the CBC, to work in radio drama. I worked out of there for a short period of time, probably half a year, then I came back [to Edmonton] and ... organized the *CJCA Players*. (Homersham, *PI*)

The arrangement to which Homersham refers allowed him to train for a few months under the supervision of Andrew Allan and Esse W. Ljungh. Of that experience Homersham says "I learned a great deal. I think what I really went to Winnipeg for was to learn. I didn't go to produce as such, I went there to learn under Esse Ljungh and Andrew Allan. I learned a lot."

(Homersham, *PI*)

Homersham's training under Allan and Ljungh was applied to teaching others the art of radio drama. In the December 1944 *Role Call*, Elsie Park Gowan wrote about the "School for Theatre" which was then proceeding in Edmonton "under the chairmanship of Elizabeth Haynes" (p. 4). In the article, Gowan writes, "if we are to be truly creative artists in the theatre ... not merely exhibitionists ... we must train ourselves long and hard. The group of leaders of the Allied Arts courses are young, enthusiastic and hard workers in their own fields." (4) Included in the group of instructors was Doug Homersham, described by Gowan as having "a strictly professional approach to radio theatre." (4) Homersham says of Gowan's praise:

> I feel very flattered that [she] should refer to it as such. I'd hoped it would be a professional approach. That's the way I wanted to operate, and tried to operate. How professional a person is you never know, because you're always learning, and you never quit learning. (Homersham, *PI*)

The working relationship between Gowan and Homersham continued for close to twenty years.

In 1946, at the invitation of Homersham, Gowan prepared a number of scripts for a series called *This is Our Story*. The individual titles included *The Harbour of the Air*, *Hometown ... 1946*, *Sister in the Grey Gown*, and *Breeches from Bond Street*. The latter became one of Gowan's most popular scripts on both radio and stage. In 1947 the playwright and producer collaborated again, this time for a 25th anniversary special

for CJCA called *Lift Up the Towers*, part of which was aired on the CBC, and later that year a single script called *A Story for November*. In October of 1954 they again worked together, this time on the 50th anniversary pageant for the City of Edmonton called *Who Builds a City*. Produced in the Northland's Gardens, the pageant was also heard over CJCA. The scripts just mentioned all had a historical component to them, something which characterized many of the dramas Homersham produced. Although enjoyable, Homersham says there were other scripts besides historical ones which he enjoyed producing:

> I had a tendency to lean towards [a type of] script which we did for many years: murder mysteries. We had a good access to a lot of scripts that were along that line. Just the same as you might say *Murder, She Wrote* is a TV highlight today, I think that is the highlight I would refer back to in that case. (Homersham, *PI*)

Of all the highlights of his career, however, Homersham looks back to "the first show we went nationally [with] on radio. It was a show which was sent to us by the CBC, we did several of them, the first [being] sent by Esse Ljungh." (Homersham, *PI*) Unfortunately, although Homersham and others indicated that numerous shows were produced from CJCA to the national network, few of the titles and dates are extant. Howard Fink, in *Canadian National Theatre on the Air, 1925-1961*, lists Homersham as a producer only once: for the play *New Canadians* by Magdalena Eggleston for the series *Winnipeg Drama*, broadcast on the Trans-Canada Network from Edmonton, April 11, 1946.

While Homersham was establishing his *CJCA Players* in Edmonton, Clarence Mack was forging ahead with radio drama in Calgary at radio station CFAC. The most notable period of radio drama in Calgary grew out of the experiments with a group of students who were originally brought together as a subsidiary of Betty Mitchell's *Workshop 14* from Western Canada High School and called *Radio Workshop 14*. For the first project a two-station network[7] was organized with CJCA (under the direction of Doug Homersham) for a series called *The Blue Flame Theatre*, and was aired in 1948. Denny Brown outlines the manner in which this arrangement was to take place:

> *Workshop Fourteen's* radio group will begin a commercial show ... in the choice CFAC Sunday-at-4 spot recently vacated by *Ozzie and Harriet*. The sponsor has also signed an Edmonton dramatic group for a similar series and he intends alternating the groups on CFAC and CJCA to arouse and maintain the spirit of artistic competition. On the first Sunday of the program, for instance, each group will be heard in its own city. The performance will be recorded and on the following week will be played from the competing centre, and on the third week the groups again will be heard from their own stations. (*Calgary Herald*, Jan. 3, 1948, p. 5)

The episodes ran January 18 to April 4, 1948 with the respective groups performing live on the following dates with these plays:

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[7] To increase the potential audience for a single broadcast, many Alberta-based stations joined to form small networks. The Foothills Network, for example, often included CKUA and then later CJCA in Edmonton, CFAC in Calgary, CJOC in Lethbridge, and occasionally CFCN in Calgary. Other single broadcasts, for example a special Christmas broadcast, would originate at CFAC and be heard as well over CJCA, CKRD, CJOC, and CHAT.

January 18:	*Beloved Mine* (RW 14)[8]; *Killer at Timberline* (C. P.)[9]
February 1:	*Case History of a Wedding* (RW 14); *Sky Lady* (C. P.)
February 15:	*Midnight Visitor* (RW 14); *The Stronger Sex* (C. P.)
February 29:	*Antigone* (RW 14); *Other People's Lives* (C. P.)
March 14:	*The Signalman* (RW 14); *The Balzac Murder* (C. P.)
March 28:	*Memorandum For Peace* (RW 14); *The Bottle Imp* (C. P.)

As outlined by Brown, the weeks in between the shows were broadcast on the other station.

Homersham says of the six scripts produced from CJCA for the *Blue Flame Theatre*:

> They were of a historical nature, there was no question of that. The reason for those, really, was because [the] management [of] CJCA wanted them that way. They felt what we should be doing, in addition to the other things we were doing, [was] some of these historical reproductions of Alberta. (Homersham, *PI*)

While Homersham and the *CJCA Players* were producing dramas with a local flavour for the short series, CFAC and *Radio Workshop 14* were attempting scripts such as *Antigone* which they hoped would contain a more international flavour. The experiments, although considerably brave for a newly formed amateur group, did not always receive a favourable response. This review by Denny Brown appeared after the airing of *Case History of a Wedding*:

> Talking about local talent, the radio company of *Workshop Fourteen*, our local group of amateur

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[8] RW 14 = Radio Workshop 14

[9] C. P. = CJCA Players

> thespians from Western Canada High, deserves a bouquet for having improved considerably in its performance on the *Blue Flame Theatre* last Sunday at 4 on CFAC. The acting has improved by 100 per cent although the play itself was as trite as any heard on the air. All the crowd [needs to do] now is continue to polish itself dramatically and choose something a little more substantial in the way of dramatic fare. Clarence Mack and his *Workshop* crew probably are typical of local thespians in resenting too much criticism but I do suggest they listen to *Stage 48* and the *Ford Theatre* for example and instruction. They can't expect to equal the easterners -- if they could I would pay their expenses to Toronto -- but they always could learn something from the professionals. (*Calgary Herald*, Feb. 7, 1948, p. 5)

Following *Blue Flame Theatre* the *Radio Workshop 14* group was next heard in September 1948. Whether they took Brown's advice is hard to determine, although their choice of script was certainly interesting. On September 5, 1948, "*Workshop 14's* radio group [performed] an hour-long dramatization of the loves and life of Peter Tschaikowsky." (*Calgary Herald*, Sept. 4, 1948, p. 5) This was one of three new dramatic programs which made its debut on the station that day. The other two were nationally syndicated shows called *Drama of Medicine* and *Romance of Famous Jewels*[10].

By the end of 1948 the drama group had become established

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[10] CFAC, like CJCA in Edmonton, was one of the key CBC affiliates in Alberta. All stations in the province through the 1930s and 1940s carried a certain number of CBC programs. For many stations, these programs were sought after, as they usually consisted of high-quality, or highly popular programs. In 1938, CFAC was committed to carry 42 hours per week of CBC service. A decade later, in a booklet entitled *This is CFAC Calgary*, they outlined:

> CFAC has some of the top network programs originating in the United States and Canada, through our affiliation with the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's Trans-Canada network. CFAC has access to hundreds of transcribed programs from the huge All-Canada Library and from outside agencies. (7)

among theatre practitioners in Calgary, and many of the city's stage actors started to become involved with the group. In December 1948 the name was changed to *Radio Workshop Players* with the production on Christmas Eve of *The Quest of the Spirit*, a script adapted for radio by Clarence Mack from the story *The Other Wise Man* by Henry Van Dyke. The Alberta Wheat Pool sponsored the play at a total production cost of $120.00. Little was heard from the group again until 1951, and then only sporadically.

The uses of radio drama through the 1940s had become varied and indeed at times commercial. Starting in 1940, CJCA often aired fifteen-minute previews for upcoming theatre events. Written as radio dramas, these commercials occasionally included actors from the stage event, background information, and of course a push for ticket sales. Stage plays produced in Edmonton which were advertised this way include *Time and the Conways*, and *Ladies in Retirement*. Homersham indicates dramas promoting events or businesses were quite common when he says, "we did quite a few of those things. For example, we did one promoting the Royal Canadian Legion. There was a lot of that done. I don't know how many scripts we went through, but it was a good many." (Homersham, *PI*) In Calgary in 1951, CFAC aired *The Story of a Sack of Potatoes*. The half-hour script was written by Margaret Walsh:

> Especially for this presentation by Jenkins Groceteria Limited on the occasion of the official opening of their new premises in East Calgary. Those taking part in the portrayals of characters,

> were Tom Snelgrove, Betty Cooper, Bob Cruse, Dick Tregillus, Ellawynne Rivet, Jack Cahan, Bill Hustler, & Cec Palmer. The narrators were Doug Short and Dan Wood. Technical operation by Bob Charman and Cec Palmer. (Walsh, *Story*)

In the play we are introduced to a family, who through their conversations reveal how Jenkins' Groceteria came into being all from a sack of potatoes.

The important aspect of *The Story of a Sack of Potatoes* does not lie in its commercial value but in the cast which was assembled for the production. The participants became part of a core of actors who would remain an integral part of radio drama (as well as live theatre) in Calgary through its final days as the leading entertainment source. In 1952 *Radio Workshop Players* were renamed *CFAC Radio Workshop*, and began performing weekly for what became known as *Wednesday Night Playhouse*. The first production was aired on January 15, 1952. In the opening narration[11], Clarence Mack outlined the purpose of this venture:

> This evening, marks the opening and the first in a series of locally produced dramas which will feature aspiring radio actors and actresses. To me, has fallen the responsibility and pleasure of producing these half hour dramas, which we hope, will serve as entertainment for our listeners, and opportunities for those who look to radio as a means of dramatic expression.
>
> Our opening show, is one written by a Canadian radio writer, Alan Pearce. It's a comedy, titled *Fascinating Freddy*, and we might add, a drama which enjoyed a performance on the B.B.C. in England some

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[11] This quotation was taken directly from the production script. The excessive use of commas is a broadcast-type notation to help the announcer with pacing. Announcers who notate their scripts for pacing will usually use either a comma or a slash (/) within the text.

time ago.

Fascinating Freddy, will feature the voices of Jack Philips as Freddy, ... Ellawyne Rivet in the role of Marcia, Ron Poffenroth as the Father, Elizabeth Atkinson as both Ellen and Lady Maxton... Bob Cruse as Lefty and Ed Hall as Butch.

And now, it is with a great deal of pleasure that we signal the overture for *CFAC's Radio Workshop*, and *Fascinating Freddy*.

The play was the first of nineteen which aired in the initial season. Other plays included an adaptation of *The Lady of Camellias* by Alexander Dumas; *The True Story of Dick Whittington* by Frank Vyvyan; *Henry's Story* and *The Man Who Went Back* by former Calgarian Edgar D. Smith; *Winners Never Wait* by Clarence Mack[12]; *The Faithful Heart* by Lister Sinclair; and *Bump on a Log* and *Breeches From Bond Street* by Elsie Park Gowan. The closing credits of *The Man Who Went Back* by Edgar D. Smith, aired May 14, 1952, included the following comments from Clarence Mack:

> Since January 16th, when we began this current series of *Radio Workshop* dramas, we have presented to date 17 shows, varying from comedies, to serious dramas, biographical, western folk-type stories, and this evening an experimental form of the radio art. Also during this time, we have brought before our audiences 37 actors and actresses from the ranks of Calgary's thespians. This present series of locally produced dramas will expire on the 28th of the month, and as of June 4th, a new series will commence which will also feature local dramatic talent, both in acting and writing. This new series will be of a documentary nature depicting the progress of Calgary industries which have grown and advanced with the progress of the City of Calgary.

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[12] The play is a documentary and was being presented in conjunction with the Cancer Drive for Funds which was under way in April 1952. The opening narration said the play "is a repeat performance, having been produced approximately two years ago."

The new series to which Mack referred became known as *The Calgary Story* and ran Wednesday evenings for 24 weeks from June 4 to December 10, 1952.

The Calgary Story was written by various writers including Shirley Shea, LaRae Robertson, Joe Marks, Margaret Walsh and Clarence Mack. Each of the scripts highlighted a particular industry or company in Calgary, and outlined in a dramatic form the foundation or history of the particular topic. *The Story of a Sack of Potatoes* for Jenkins' Groceteria was repeated during this series. Companies which were highlighted over the twenty episodes included, among others: Calgary Brewing and Malting Company; Okalta Oils (discovery of oil in Alberta); Hudson's Bay Company, United Grain Growers Ltd.; Canadian Red Cross Society; Canadian Cancer Society; Riverside Iron Works; and the Calgary Power Company.

While *The Calgary Story* was still being aired, the *CFAC Radio Workshop* took on another project: a five-week series for Canada Savings Bonds written by Shirley Shea. Aired Sunday afternoons from October 12 to November 9 at 1:30 p.m., the plays followed the adventures of Marnie, who, while living an average life-style, discovers the benefits of Canada Savings Bonds. The five plays included: *Marnie Goes Apartment Hunting*, *Marnie At a Dude Ranch*, *Marnie Gets a Job*, *Marnie Goes to a Football Game*, and *Marnie's Grand Slam*.

The second season of CFAC's *Wednesday Night Playhouse*, began a month after the conclusion of *The Calgary Story*. The

nineteen-week series, January 14 to May 27, 1953, was as diverse as the previous year's, covering experimental, classical, historical, local, and fairy tales. Some of the plays produced that season included an adaptation of *The Sire De Maletroit's Door* by Robert Louis Stevenson; *The Ghost in the Gloves* by Edgar D. Smith; *The Pirate of Peace River* by Elsie Park Gowan; *Little Red Riding Hood* from *Alabama Fables; Two Weeks in the Sun* by Archie MacCorkindale; *All About Family* by Lister Sinclair; and an adaptation of *Orpheus and Eurydice* by Archie MacCorkindale. Most of the actors who appeared in the first season returned in the second season, and had established themselves as regulars. The group performed sporadically throughout the summer of 1953 before embarking on the third season of plays, which was the first of two twenty-eight-week seasons.

From November 4, 1953, to May 26, 1954, the *CFAC Radio Workshop* once again performed on a weekly basis. During this season the fee structure changed slightly to allow the producer and operator, who prior to November 1953 were unpaid, to receive remuneration for their services. This season supported, as did previous seasons, a high number of Canadian authors including Lister Sinclair, Howard Rodman, Mavor Moore, Archie MacCorkindale, Fletcher Markle, Edgar D. Smith, Avis Carroll Walton, and Elsie Park Gowan. Many of the productions during this season had been aired before by the CBC. Numerous scripts which had been produced by the CBC had been made

available to stations willing to pay the royalty fees for local production. This made the job of script selection very easy for the drama enthusiasts at CFAC, who continued, even with the strong advancements in television in Alberta, to air locally and nationally produced radio drama.

The final season of *Wednesday Night Playhouse* started October 20, 1954 and ran for 28 consecutive weeks until April 27, 1955. Besides the authors who had become common on *Wednesday Night Playhouse* -- Allan Pearce, Lister Sinclair, Elsie Park Gowan and Archie MacCorkindale -- adaptations by authors such as Mark Twain, Emily Bronte, and Edgar Allan Poe, and an original work by Arch Oboler[13] appeared. More than 40 actors had been employed during the season, with a few of the well established actors appearing in a number of shows. Cast

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[13] Fink claims "What Norman Corwin was to CBS in the late 1930s and the 1940s, Arch Oboler was to NBC. Like Corwin, Oboler eventually controlled the major creative aspects of his own series, writing producing and directing." (In Lewis, p. 217) Oboler became widely known for his creative and realistic use of sound effects and his stream-of-consciousness technique of production and writing. One of Oboler's most talked about projects was the two years he spent producing *Lights Out* for NBC (1936-1938). Dunning says:

> Under Oboler, the most grisly sound effects imaginable were employed. When people were electrocuted, sound men held frying bacon up to the mike and made sparks fly with a telegraph key attached to a dry cell battery. Bones were broken by smashing spareribs with a pipe wrench. Maple syrup dripping on a plate sounded just like drops of blood, and heads were lopped off with the precision swing of a sound man's blade chopping through a head of cabbage.
>
> When Oboler created his famed tale of a man turned inside out by a demonic fog, the sound was created by soaking a rubber glove in water and turning it inside out while a berry basket was crushed. When a script called for the sound of a body splattering against pavement, a soaked rag was hurled against a cement slab. A sharp knife through a piece of pork gave a realistic impression of ripping flesh. And in what *Radio Guide* once described as "the most monstrous of all sounds," cooked spaghetti was squished and squashed to connote human flesh being eaten. (362-63)

Oboler is considered to be one of the top three drama producers in the United States during the golden age of radio.

lists for 23 of the 28 plays are extant, and from those lists a computation of the number of plays in which each actor appeared is shown in Table II. Nine of the actors represented

Table II *Wednesday Night Playhouse* Actor Breakdown

Number of plays actors appeared in during 1954/55 season on *CFAC Wednesday Night Playhouse*.			
Roy Bader	14	Jeffrey Howles	3
Tom Snelgrove	11	Kaye Jordan	3
Bill Speerstra	9	Janice Buxton	3
Bob Cruse	9	Don McDermid	2
Allan Kerr	7	Joan Rabakowsky	2
Gerry Tildesley	7	Brenda Cordwell	1
Jacquie Nowlin	7	Joan Palfrey	1
Barbara Schumiatcher	7	Lillian Ried	1
Jack Goth	7	Graham Niven	1
Elisabeth Atkinson	6	Kenneth Scott	1
Betty Cooper	6	George Brown	1
Bart Brown	6	Edith Pearlman	1
Chris Wiggins	4	Paul Jardine	1
John Cotton	4	Bruce Andrews	1
Dick Tregillus	4	Joe Anderson	1
Cy Groves	4	Josephine Harris	1
Doris Andrews	4	Bob Charman	1
Norma Moore	3	Jean Farqurharson	1
Joaquina Ballard	3	John Barron	1
Marlene Polak	3	Morley Kerr	1

in Table II were next heard on the national airwaves a few weeks after the conclusion of the 1954/55 season.

In July 1955, Clarence Mack and his *CFAC Radio Workshop* were invited to produce four plays for a short CBC series which became known as *Chinook Playhouse*. The actors which took part in the series include: Allan Kerr, Barbara Schumiatcher, Betty Cooper, Bill Speerstra, Dick Tregillus, Elisabeth Atkinson, Jacquie Nowlin, Roy Bader, and Tom Snelgrove. The plays which Mack produced for the series were *Darling Have You Checked* by Elfreida Read, July 5; *Autumn Affair* by Kae McRae, July 12; *Small Town Blues* by Alfred Harris, July 19; and *Latitude Thirteen North* by Leonard St. Clair, July 26. Immediately after the series concluded, Clarence Mack wrote to Dan Cameron, Program Director of the Prairie Region of the CBC, and commented:

> It has naturally been quite a boost to the morale of our local actors and speaking for both the cast and for myself may I again express our appreciation for the opportunity to originate this show from Calgary. (Mack, *Letter to Dan Cameron*, July 27, 1955)

Mack further expressed an interest in receiving some critical analysis of the four shows. His request was answered by Cameron:

> It has taken a while to get a reasonably accurate consensus of opinion regarding *Chinook Playhouse*. Here they are:
>
> 1. Music - very well handled
> 2. Sound effects - quite good
> 3. Acting - good for the most part
>
> We were particularly pleased with the pacing and the general emotion created. Once in a while we felt some of the parts were over dramatized, and

> that they could be a bit more relaxed. However, we did feel that the performances were quite vital and certainly held interest. Production was, in the overall, quite smoothly handled. Of the four productions our vote for top honours went to *Small Town Blues*. (Cameron, *Letter to Clarence Mack*, Aug. 19, 1955)

Mack responded to Cameron:

> Personally, I was very gratified to know that the production proved satisfactory, and it is rather strange you selected *Small Town Blues*, since we felt it had gone a bit flat. (Mack, *Letter to Dan Cameron*, Sept. 7, 1955)

CFAC's drama productions, like CJCA's, continued sporadically into the 1960s.

Producers who were members of an already existing broadcasting facility were usual. Not as common were independent producers who would write and produce their own scripts for individual clients. The company Flemming Radio Productions with its owner Frank Flemming as head writer and producer was one such Alberta organization. Flemming wrote the series *Alberta Scrapbook*, which aired in 1949 on CFAC Calgary and CJOC Lethbridge for thirteen weeks beginning February 9, 1949. Doug Short, who also worked with Clarence Mack, was program engineer. The following year, another series with a local historical flavour was produced by Flemming called *The Alberta Story*, another thirteen-week series. The episode on "fur and trapping", which aired April 23, 1950, contained

> A copy of what may be considered Canada's first "transcribed commercial announcement" [which] was recently unearthed in an old mechanical phonograph by Frank Fleming, Calgary Radio producer. The thirty-year-old record was made by the Hudson's Bay Company on the occasion of its 250th anniversary in

> 1920. The record, a black disc, six inches in diameter and made of a cardboard composition, gives the history of the Hudson's Bay company, sketchily and scratchily, as told by a narrator with a pronounced English accent and sound effects of birds, animals and tom-toms. (*Alberta Broadcast Programmes*. Vol. 5, No. 17 Week of April 16th to 22nd, 1950, p. 1)

Flemming's productions seldom went beyond locally written material.

Many of the scripts which Clarence Mack produced for *Wednesday Night Playhouse* were written by or adapted by Canadian writers. For a producer in Alberta, scripts had become increasingly easy to acquire by the mid-1940s, through a variety of script services which had begun appearing in the late 1930s. These included, among many others: *Radio Script Catalogue*, *Radioplay Service*, *Lester Radio Scripts*, and *A Catalogue of New Plays*.

Radio Script Catalogue, published by the Association of the Junior Leagues of America, specialized in scripts suitable for younger audiences. By their tenth year (1950) they had acquired approximately 400 scripts. Royalties ranged from $5.00 to $10.00 for "use of scripts on a single station on non-commercial time only. For commercially sponsored local programs or for any network program, special arrangements must be made with the author through the AJLA Consultant." (5) Royalties were not charged for scripts used in classroom, auditorium and public address systems, or for workshop study, although an advance deposit of $5.00 was required before the script was sent. Scripts were available for reading for two

weeks, after which rental charges of fifty cents for the first week and twenty-five cents for each additional week were charged.

Radioplay Service, from Hollywood, California, was a service which specialized in scripts aimed at the popular taste in radio drama. With this service scripts were purchased instead of rented. If a producer was interested in reading the script he would be charged fifteen cents for a fifteen-minute script and twenty-five cents for a half-hour script. If production was later deemed feasible, the royalty fee would then be paid. Otherwise, fees of $1.00 to $5.00 covered the cost of the script and royalty. Through this service an entire series could be purchased; for example, *Here Comes Scotland Yard*, a thirteen episode series, cost $2.50 per episode or $30.00 for the entire series. This covered the royalty fees, and supplied the producer with ten copies of each script. (*Radioplay Service*, 1951-1952 catalogue, p. 9) Prices for plays acquired from this service were the same whether aired during sponsored or sustaining programming time.

Of a similar style to *Radioplay Service* was the *Lester Radio Scripts* also originating from Hollywood, California. This catalogue was on occasion used by Clarence Mack of CFAC. Of particular interest to Mack was the section called "Celebrated Plays", which contained, as referred to by Lester, "adaptations of some of the greatest comedies and dramas ever written. They have been rewritten into first class, modern,

radio entertainment. Issued in regular script form." (*Lester Radio Scripts*, Fall, 1947, p. 6) For plays chosen from "Celebrated Plays" prices were twenty-five cents per script or 21 scripts for $5.00, with no royalty charges. In other sections of the catalogue, royalties and rules were the same as those found in *Radioplay Service*.

In Canada *A Catalogue of New Plays*, published by Samuel French (Canada) Limited, supplied producers with scripts, usually of a higher quality and calibre than those from the other services. Reading fees ranged from $1.00 to $2.75 and royalties were in the $25.00 to $35.00 range for each performance. Many well-known writers were included in *A Catalogue of New Plays*, including a number of Canadian writers.

Use of syndicated services and play catalogues was popular, but, as Doug Homersham points out, "there was no reason for a radio station to subscribe to it unless they had the organization behind them to produce [the scripts]." (Homersham, *PI*) For Homersham, and Mack, it was often just as easy to commission local writers for the job, especially in those instances when local history was to be the focus, such as *The Calgary Story*, or *This is Our Story*. For topics of pure entertainment, that is, not written to emphasize local history, very few of the writers were Alberta residents. During the 'golden age' of radio it was difficult for writers residing in Alberta to find success writing radio scripts for the national networks. The three major CBC production facil-

ities were in Toronto, Vancouver and Winnipeg, and, for reasons of proximity, writers often migrated to those areas. There were, however, a few script writers who did originate from Alberta and were heard by a national audience. The following summary of writers is intended to present a list of the radio writers of which historians of Alberta theatre should be aware.

Gwen Pharis Ringwood occasionally wrote for radio, but preferred to focus on her first love: stage plays. Her work on *New Lamps for Old*, with Elsie Park Gowan, as well as a radio adaptation of *The Courting of Marie Jenvrin*, earned her acceptance as a radio script writer. In 1954, then living in Williams Lake, B.C., Ringwood wrote *The Play's the Thing* and *A Polished Performance* both of which were heard as part of the CBC School Broadcasts[14], originating in Alberta.

W. O. Mitchell, originally from Weyburn, Saskatchewan, settled in High River, Alberta, where he did a substantial portion of his writing. His series *Jake and the Kid*, for which he wrote over two hundred episodes, was a popular weekly series on CBC radio from 1950 to 1956.

Sheilagh Jameson began her writing career with short stories, and then during the 1950's turned her attention to radio plays for the education network heard on CBC. Her play

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[14] The School Broadcasts were plays designed for school-age children which aired during school hours. For many years the license fees normally levied were waived for educational institutions. Those schools unable to afford radios were often supplied with equipment from local companies on the days the educational broadcasts were aired.

Cattle in the Coulees (1952) is a script with an Alberta theme which was aired during the School Broadcasts. Jameson gave up radio writing to take an archivist position with the Glenbow Museum in Calgary.

N. Alice Frick, although originally from Alberta, did not write scripts while residing in the province. She is more widely known for her work as the script editor for the CBC Drama Department from 1942 to 1961. During her tenure with the CBC she occasionally wrote an adaptation or original work for a drama series. Eighteen plays broadcast on the CBC networks between 1944 and 1961 are attributed to Nora Alice Frick. (For a listing of her plays see Howard Fink, *Canadian National Theatre on the Air, 1925-1961*).

Tommy Tweed was born in Medicine Hat, Alberta, and, like Alice Frick, did not write radio plays while living in Alberta. For a short time he was employed with CFAC in Calgary. He started writing for radio station CKY in Winnipeg while attending the University of Manitoba. He moved to Toronto in 1941 and helped to shape the golden age of radio on the CBC. (Howard Fink, in *The Oxford Companion to Canadian Theatre*, 572).

Iris Allen is more widely known as a newspaper columnist (she wrote "The Third Column" for the *Edmonton Journal* 1952 to 1955), syndicated writer, and novelist. While living in Edmonton she was also successful as a script writer for the educational network of the CBC. Among her works aired on that

network were the adaptation of *Workaday Cowboy* by Kerry Wood, broadcast January 22, 1954; *The Adventures of Dick Whittington* aired January 11, 1955; an adaptation of *Many Moons* by James Thurber, broadcast October 14, 1955; as well as plays for the programme *Western Gateways* including *Jonas Salk Polio Fighter* on March 7, 1956; *Sukanabi*, December 7, 1956; and *Statesman in Paint and Blanket* which aired March 19, 1957. Allen continued to write for the educational network into the 1960s. Prior to her scripts for the educational network, Allen had written plays which she hoped would air nationally, and was successful twice. Her first nationally broadcast script was the play *The Velvet Glove* which was submitted to CKUA and subsequently broadcast by that station on Monday, April 8, 1940 as part of the series *Plays of our Province*[15]. One year later, on April 9, 1941, *The Velvet Glove* was heard on the western network of the CBC. The play, produced in Winnipeg by Charles Wright, was aired during the series *Winnipeg Drama*. Her second CBC production came later in 1941, on October 30, with the script *That's Hollywood* which was also produced from Winnipeg by the same producer for the same series. A royalty of $35.00 each was awarded Allen for her CBC contributions.

Hazel Robinson was born and educated in Calgary. Among

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[15] *Plays of Our Province* was a series arranged by Elsie Park Gowan and co-produced by Gowan and Richard Macdonald. All of the plays in the series were written by Albertans, and focused on "the comedy and drama in the lives of the young people in our province." (*EPG Scrapbook*, p. 66) Many of the regular actors involved with the *CKUA Players* took part in the productions including: Farnham Howarth, Gavin Bright, Francess Garness, Myrna Hirtle, Jack Delaney, Richard Locke, Fred Bendle, and Donald Macdonald.

her many assignments,

> She was a reporter on the Calgary *Albertan*, Radio continuity and Program writer at Station CJCJ in Calgary ... [and] for several years she was Script Editor with the Radio Branch of the Department of Education in Alberta and helped develop School Broadcasting there. (Rimmer, in Robinson, *Poems and a Play*, 1)

While working for the Department of Education Robinson wrote or co-wrote more than 20 scripts for the school broadcasts. Her two verse dramas, *This Perilous Dream*, and *Improvisations on a Sombre Theme*, were broadcast on the CBC's Trans-Canada Network, November 11, 1949, and October 4, 1950 respectively. Her love of poetry was evident in her plays, especially *This Perilous Dream*, which was a radio adaptation of a poem she had written concerning the war. The closing speech shows the poetic influence:

NARRATOR:
May that strange Power which has made
This glory and this horror that is man
Find in the bleeding hearts across a ravaged world
Some minds still free enough to play,
Some valiant throats full enough to speak,
Some hands strong enough to work,
Some lives to give their last full measure
For a peace that is a peace
And not a sham.
And when the covering blanket of the years
Has fallen gently on our times and we
Are one with history
This be our epitaph, our glory and our only claim
To immortality
MUSIC: SNEAK IN BACKGROUND...COMING UP BEHIND
That out of craven, cringing fear
We shook our souls,
We bound our loins,
Faced Hell!
And built a world,
A peaceful, just and righteous world

Fit for the sons of Man,
A glory unto God!
MUSIC: SWELL AND UP TO TIME

(Robinson, *Poems and a Play*)

This Perilous Dream, produced by Drew Crossen, featured the acting talents of Budd Knapp, John Drainie, Claire Murray, Mavor Moore, Larry McCance, Doug Haskins, Sandra Scott and Frank Perry. It was a significant lineup of talent, considering it was the author's first attempt at nationally broadcast drama. Robinson passed away after an illness in 1954.

Elsie Park Gowan is the writer who many consider to be the most prolific of those whose work originated from Alberta. Her work is discussed in a separate chapter.

From as early as 1923 until the late 1950s, radio drama was one of the most important aspects of radio. It held the attention of writers, producers, and actors as well as the listening public. George Robertson, a Canadian writer of radio and stage plays, wrote in 1959:

> The first time I saw a script for a radio play, it seemed like a wonderful, special language, as unique as a poem, more direct, more immediate than a story. I suppose I was at university then. A year or two later, in a class of "creative writing", we listened to the news that the CBC would pay $75 for a half-hour radio play. Here was the ideal: to be able to say what you wanted, create characters you believed in, and to get paid for it. (*Canadian Literature*, Number 2, Autumn 1959, p. 59)

This was (and still is) the dream of many aspiring writers. A similar dream existed for many aspiring actors and producers. Although the largest percentage of plays heard in Alberta originated outside of the province, there was a considerable

amount of quality work being written and produced in the province. The majority of this work was intended for an Alberta audience, although there were times when work originating in the province crossed beyond its borders, and was heard by a national audience.

Television was introduced to Alberta viewers in 1952, yet some of the best drama which originated from the province, such as the *CFAC Radio Workshop*, came after television arrived. Television affected broadcasting nationally earlier than it did in Alberta. In October 1955, Sally Sinclair, writing in "Western Airwaves", says,

> With the development of TV drama productions peculiarly suited to a visual medium, a report from the CBC states that radio is stressing more and more the things it can do best. These include plays, the report continues, with panoramic settings, calling for quick shift in time or scenery of the sort radio can achieve with a few suggestive bars from the orchestra, and dramas with rich literary content in which the great possibilities rest in an accomplished projection of the language. This is the thinking behind CBC *Stage*, the new Sunday evening drama ... produced by Esse Ljungh. Mr. Ljungh's slogan for the season is "promising plays on the radio as intriguing as any of the prize-winners the CBC has put on in the past years." Plans therefore are afoot to present several classics, and a number of leading Canadian writers contribute original radio dramas. (*Calgary Herald*, Oct. 15, 1955, p. 9)

For Alberta audiences, even though television was making rapid gains in popularity, radio was still a major component of daily life. This was especially true in rural Alberta where television reception was inadequate, or non-existent. The radio dramas which did originate in Alberta may not have

been of the same calibre as those produced by Andrew Allan, whose works were heard regularly in the province, but they did contain a local flavour, which the nationally-syndicated programs could not match. To the popular taste, and to those reviewing programs, the national programs often came under scrutiny. Denny Brown, in "Western Airwaves", said,

> Leader of the corporation's best, of course, is *Stage 48*, for a long time the only worthwhile feature out of Toronto. Andrew Allan's weekly dramatic presentation reached a new high last Sunday in his version of *The Picture of Dorian Grey*. Action and production were excellent, far superior to the popular heights ever reached by Monday's *Radio Theatre*, top-rating American dramatic program. (*Calgary Herald*, March 20, 1948, p. 5)

Brown had further accolades for *Stage* at the conclusion of the 1948 season:

> This is the spot to repeat the obvious, that *Stage 48* was one of the top-flight program series produced by the corporation. Andrew Allen's choice of scripts and acute direction reached a new high this past season and the polished performances by his versatile cast should have been first class tickets to bigger and better things for all of them. We can only look forward to *Stage 49*. (*Calgary Herald*, June 5, 1948, p. 5)

Brown's response at that time to the *Stage* series reflects the sentiment many people express towards all or most of the radio drama produced during the golden age of radio.

There are those, however, who feel the quality and production levels of the nationally aired and syndicated programs may not have been as grand as we now think. Bronwyn Drainie, for example, in her biography of her father John Drainie makes some very pointed and valid comments concerning

radio drama. She feels that the legend of the golden age of radio "far outdistanced its factual beginnings" and claims "the plays presented on the CBC between 1940 and 1965 were by no means uniformly brilliant; they were being written and produced in far too great a quantity to ensure general brilliance." (9) She gives as an example the 1952 season in which "the CBC drama output in French and English exceeded 1,100 plays, 96 percent of which were written or adapted by Canadians." (9) The sheer volume of plays produced in a season such as 1952 ensured that

> Not all of them could be masterpieces. As for the quality of the productions, the intervening years tend to wreak havoc with our aesthetic perceptions so that it's difficult for an audience today to evaluate work produced forty years ago, before edited audiotape and videotape had altered forever our notions of artistic language and rhythm. (9)

Drainie further states,

> It's true that CBC radio had a virtually captive audience in vast reaches of the country's interior, but in large cities with a plethora of commercial stations, or in settlements close enough to the U.S. border to catch the radio waves directly, American entertainment held sway. ... In the cities, there was always a certain degree of cultural choice, and urban Canadians exercised that choice in much the same percentages in the nineteen forties as they do in the nineteen eighties. (9-10)

In Alberta the local stations rated higher than those originating from the United States, but a number of U. S. stations were listened to regularly and faithfully by Alberta audiences.

Syndicated programs, and shows originating outside the province but heard within its borders, dominated the drama

which was available. Stations which did not produce their own drama often set aside time slots for a daily or weekly series of plays. CFCN in Calgary, for two seasons, 1955 and 1956, ran *Variety Theatre* which contained shows like *Adventures of Frank Rice, Deadline for Danger, Frontier Town, Hollywood Theatre of the Stars, Hopalong Cassidy, Horatio Hornblower, Let George Do It, Opportunity Knocks, Richard Diamond Private Detective, Scarlet Pimpernell, Stand By for Crime, Strange Wills, T-Men, Theatre of Thrills,* and *Theatre Royal*. The shows ran for an hour in the afternoons Sunday to Friday, and for two hours in the evenings Monday to Thursday.

A quick glance over a typical week's listing of radio programs[16] in January 1948 revealed the following programs, originating from local stations or from network broadcasts in Canada and the U.S., which were available to Alberta listeners: *Ma Perkins, Pepper Young, The Lone Ranger, The Green Hornet, Guild Players, Around the World in 80 Days, The Saint, Curtain Calls, Count of Monte Cristo, Big Town, Curtain Time, My Favourite Story, The Aldrich Family, Crime Photographer, Mystery is my Hobby, Man Called 'X', Curtain Going Up, London Playhouse, Vancouver Drama, The Thin Man, The Shadow, Ozzie and Harriet, Mystery Theatre, Drama of Medicine, Gang Busters, Dark Venture, Murder and Mr. Malone, Adventures of Sam Spade, Christopher Wells, Star Theatre, Movie Town Theatre, Fibber*

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[16] See the *Edmonton Journal, Calgary Herald,* or any other newspaper for daily and weekly radio listings.

McGee and Molly, *Studio One*, *Stage '48*, and many others. It is this type of competition that the *CJCA Drama Club* and *CFAC Radio Workshop*, who were both on the air in January of 1948, faced every time their microphones went live, and the theme music swelled up and out to:

> ANNOUNCER: Welcome to another episode in the ongoing series of plays presented for your enjoyment by a dedicated group of local thespians. Tonight's play is called...

Radio Drama: A Business Perspective.

This chapter will explore radio and radio drama from the business aspect of broadcasting and will include examinations of commercial radio, program structure, ratings, and audience relative to radio drama. During the golden age of radio, drama played an important role in attracting and maintaining what was rapidly becoming the most important aspect of radio: the audience (which for many, equals ratings).

Prior to television, radio was considered the main source of entertainment for the family, and radio drama was an essential part of that entertainment. Genres which included action adventure, horror, mystery, science fiction, soap opera, and history were wrapped in the guise of radio drama and played throughout the broadcast day. John Dunning, in the foreword to *Tune In Yesterday*, says,

> The axiom that people wanted entertainment, not intellectual balderdash, repeated itself every time the Hooper company released its ratings of top radio shows. The Neilsen company is still finding it true in TV three decades later: people best like shows that can be described as sheer escapism. (vii)

Episodes in the thousands were aired in the United States and Canada. Some, like *The Shadow* and *The Lone Ranger*, were very popular and remained on the air twenty years or more. There were many others, on the other hand, which lasted for only a few weeks before they were withdrawn from public scrutiny.

Successful dramas had many people working together to

make the product attractive: writers, actors, technicians, sound-effects personnel, orchestras, and producers were among those needed for radio drama. Ultimately, however, much of the responsibility for a good product fell to the producer (radio's version of the theatre director). Radio drama in Canada was blessed with a number of high-quality producers, of whom Andrew Allan stands out at the top. Many producers or would-be producers trained under Allan, including Doug Homersham, who was the drama producer at Edmonton station CJCA during the 1940s and 1950s. Of early radio audiences Homersham says:

> When radio was growing, you were experimenting. That was the important thing. Then, of course, radio was the centre of your living room. That was your entertainment. Radio was a real challenge to those who were in it, because they were trying to experiment with radio, and make radio as attractive to the audience as possible. You were in the entertainment business then. (Homersham, *PI*)

The experimental aspect of radio to which Homersham refers was more important in the very early days of radio than was the entertainment value, or even the potential financial returns. To help put this in perspective: the first commercial stations in Canada were not allowed, by government regulation, to collect fees for advertising. Included in the 1923 "License to use Radio" from the Department of Marine and Fisheries was regulation number four which stated:

> No tolls, fees or other consideration shall be received, levied or collected by the licensee on account of any service performed by the licensed station. (See Bird, 31)

In effect, this meant if a station decided to run advertising for a client, they were not allowed to collect any money for the service. This regulation was amended in 1924 to allow the collection of fees for advertising service:

> Provided the following instructions are carefully observed in regard to advertising:--
>
> 1. No direct advertising may be undertaken by any private commercial broadcasting station between the hours of 6.30 p.m. and 11 p.m., local time;
>
> 2. Indirect advertising shall be undertaken during any of the periods the station is licensed to operated.
>
> Examples of the two classes of advertising would be:--
>
> 1. *Direct advertising;* An automobile firm renting the station for, say, ten minutes, for the purpose of extolling the virtues and merits of their particular make of machine;
>
> 2. *Indirect advertising;* A departmental store renting the station for a couple of hours and putting on a first class entertainment, with no advertising in it at all, the only connection between the store and the programme being the announcement of their name and the fact that they were contributing the concert, before and after every number.
>
> It is further observed that in arranging hours of working for the different private broadcasting stations in any area, preference will be given to the requirements of private broadcasting stations which do not undertake advertising service. (See Bird, 35-6)

The decision to allow fees to be collected for advertising services was one of the most important factors which ultimate-

ly decided the quality and quantity of radio programming[17].

Radio programmes were divided into two categories: sponsored and sustaining. A sponsored programme was one in which a client had purchased either the entire programme, or a portion thereof. Advertising was usually done by the quarter-hour or half-hour, and programmes were often built around the potential advertisement in fifteen-minute increments. A half-hour programme would normally have a sponsor mention at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end. Fifteen-minute episodes would have sponsor mentions at the beginning and end of the programme, and hour-long shows would have spot breaks on the quarter-hours. Denny Brown relates:

> The sponsor, naturally, doesn't overlook the obvious opportunities [to relay his message]. If a musical bridge doesn't cut in on the continuity the announcer does. He promises the blood and thunder

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[17] The more listeners a radio station or broadcast network has, the higher are the fees they can charge for advertising. The higher the advertising fees, the more money the station earns. This broadcasting adage was developed shortly after radio stations were allowed to charge for advertising. Since that time the goal of programmers has been to discover what the audience wanted to hear, and then supply that product in hopes of gaining the largest percentage of listeners, and thus the most money. It is the audience which makes the final decision as to what they like and as long as a program remains a favourite, and attracts a large audience, it will stay on the air. When a program starts to lose popularity, it is usually replaced with something that is hoped will bring the listeners back. This cycle of programming to popular taste developed through the 1930s and 1940s and has remained the essence of broadcasting today. This is particulary evident in television which maintains the format of programs. Fifteen-minute, half-hour and one-hour programs have become less frequent on radio since the advancement of television, although they do still exist on the CBC and FM radio stations in Canada. Prior to September 1991, CRTC regulations required FM stations to supply the listener with a certain amount of foreground programming (a feature on an artist or topic of at least 15 minutes duration). As of September 1991, the foreground requirement for FM stations was replaced by a spoken word component which allowed many stations to diminish the number of foreground programs they ran.

> will continue in a second and then goes into a couple of minutes worth of rapturous commercial routine. (*Calgary Herald*, Dec. 11, 1948, p. 5)

It was usually only in the 'serious' radio dramas, heard during the sustaining times, that the entire drama was heard without commercial interruption.

On individual stations, sustaining programmes were those for which no sponsor had been secured and the station, not wanting to sign off during that time block, would run a programme anyway. Many locally produced programmes in Alberta were often of the sustaining variety, and the stations would incur all costs associated with the production. The *Wednesday Night Playhouse*, originating from CFAC in Calgary from 1952 to 1955, is an example of a series in which episodes were often of the sustaining variety. In a promotional booklet published circa 1949, entitled *This Is CFAC Calgary*, the following justification for sustaining programs was found:

> Sustaining programs, too, have their place. Just because a period is not sold, that doesn't mean a blank space in the schedule. People still listen, and there must be something there for them to hear. We still want an audience, therefore the sustaining programs must come up to the commercial programs in quality and presentation. (p. 8)

Howard Fink, in his essay "The sponsor's v. the nation's choice: North American radio drama", outlines the purpose of sustaining programs on the network level when he says:

> [Sustaining programmes were] unsponsored programmes provided by the networks to complete the schedules of their affiliates. Sustaining programmes occupied unsold time, usually outside of prime time, and constituted as small a proportion of the broadcasting day as could be contrived. The contents of

> sustaining programmes were often of a cultural or educational nature; and it was here, among the serious music and the talks, that serious 'prestige' radio drama could be heard - a very small proportion indeed of the schedule. (Lewis, 187)

On the U.S. networks sustaining programmes seldom, if ever, attracted the large number of listeners as the sponsored popular programs[18].

Because sponsored programmes usually attracted larger audiences (hence the sponsorship) than sustaining programmes, it meant higher salaries for those involved in the production of the sponsored program. This was true on a national as well as a local level. During the 1953/54 season (November 4, 1953 to May 26, 1954) twenty-eight sustaining plays were produced from the studios of CFAC Calgary for the series *Wednesday Night Playhouse*. Prior to this season, the operator and producer were not receiving remuneration for their services other than their regular salary. The sound-effect technician, the actors, and the royalty charge of $10.00 per show were the only expenses. At the beginning of the 1953/54 season, however, the operator began to be paid. Approximately halfway through the season a fee was also awarded to the producer. For their wages the cast and crew rehearsed Tuesdays from 8 p.m. until midnight, performed a dress rehearsal Wednesdays at 8

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[18] In Canada, the CBC (and prior to that the CRBC and CNRB) built their reputations on sustaining programs. Based on the premise of getting away from the commercial aspects of American radio the nationally governed broadcasting institution was set up. The impact, and popularity of CBC offerings such as *CBC Stage* shows how sustaining programmes were able to maintain critical acclaim, and substantial audiences, both in Canada and the United States.

p.m., and dramatized the live performance Wednesdays at 9 p.m.

In the summer of 1955, at the invitation of the CBC, CFAC was the host station of four scripts for a series which became known as *Chinook Playhouse*. CFAC's producer, Clarence Mack, received a letter from Dan Cameron of the CBC outlining the payment structure:

> We will pay the usual network ... rates for this regional broadcast for a total of 4½ hours rehearsal. This works out to $25.50 per person. Your fee for production will be $75.00 per occasion. (Cameron, in *CFAC Papers*)

Because this program was to be aired nationally, the cast rehearsed more than their allotted four and a half hours, but also received up to five times their normal fee.

On January 1, 1958, CFAC broadcast a locally sponsored play called *1957 - Crossroads of Time*. The play was written by producer Clarence Mack and was aired over CFAC, CJCA, CJOC, CHAT, and CKRD. The sponsor, Canadian Oils Limited, allowed a production budget of $390.00 for the province-wide broadcast.

The manner in which funds were allocated for the three types of programs is shown in Table III.

From the information in Table III it may be assumed that sustaining shows aired at the local level were not performed simply for the money. A producer who would work for five dollars, when he could be making seventy-five to one-hundred dollars for the same task, was obviously working for the love of his craft, not the money. Actors and technicians benefited

Table III - Allocation of Funds

	Sustaining: aired locally	Sponsored: aired locally	Sustaining: aired nationally
Producer	$ 5.00	$100.00	$ 75.00
Operator	$ 5.00	$ 30.00	$ 25.50
Nar./Co Producer	n/a	$ 45.00	n/a
Narrator	$ 5.00	$ 25.00	$ 25.50
Lead Roles	$ 7.50	$ 15.00	$ 25.50
Secondary Roles	$ 5.00	$ 15.00	$ 25.50
Royalty	$ 10.00	$ 25.00	$ 30.00
Scripting	$ 5.00	$ 5.00	n/a

as well from sponsored and nationally aired programs[19]. Producers like Mack and Homersham continued to produce shows

[19] For shows which were sponsored and aired nationally, especially in the U.S., the money flowed in exorbitant amounts. In 1948, two instances occurred in the radio industry in the United States which illustrate the lengths to which programmers would go to secure the best product for their potential audience. Both announcements received attention from Denny Brown in the *Calgary Herald's* "Western Airwaves" column. On September 18, 1948, he reported:

> Freeman Gosden and Charles Correll, better known as Amos 'n' Andy, this week signed about one of the most all-inclusive contracts in radio. For a reported $2,000,000 cash, plus $75,000 a year, they have signed over to the Columbia Broadcasting System "all rights, title and interest of every kind and nature whatsoever. ... As part of the new deal A n A will return to the Columbia network and the CBC's Dominion link Oct. 3 and will be heard locally via CFCN Sunday's at 5.30. (5)

Less than three months later Brown again informed radio listeners in Alberta of another impending change when he wrote:

> Big news south of the border this week, and which should be of some interest up this way, was Columbia Broadcasting System's terse but triumphant announcement that as of Jan. 2 the Jack Benny program would be heard on CBS -- rather than NBC. ... [They are] reported to have obtained outright (this time for $4,000,000) exclusive control of all Benny's entertainment enterprises. (*Calgary Herald*, Dec. 4, p. 5)

On December 18th this figure was changed to a claim of $3,000,000.

of the sustaining variety, even though their potential salary bases could be increased greatly by working for the national networks. They continued to support the local artists because of a respect for the local talent, and a love of the product they supplied. Their efforts were rewarded in Alberta as listeners in the province tuned in and supported the local programs as regularly as they did the nationally syndicated shows. Doug Homersham supports this claim when he says,

> Radio was very conscious of ratings. In those times if we didn't have a good listening audience, management wouldn't have kept them on. It wouldn't be what I say. I could say "well, I think it was very successful," but if management didn't see the results, they weren't going to be on. (Homersham, *PI*)

For Homersham successful programs were not always of the purely entertainment variety. This was the case for many stations although entertainment certainly made up the highest percentage of a day's programming.

In 1931, Dr. J. H. Grisdale, Federal Deputy Minister of Agriculture was quoted as saying,

> Information can be just as pleasing as entertainment. The radio is important to agriculture. The young people are becoming daily more important on the farm and they want radio entertainment. Radio provides this; it keeps the farmer in touch with the market situation and weather conditions, and it also keeps him in touch with the news of local and world happenings. I think radio is more important in the farm home than in any other home, it brings the world to the front door. (*Fairview Northern Review*, Feb. 6, 1931, p. 1)

One year later, J. R. Comyn-Ching, editor of the Edmonton-based *Radioland Magazine*, observed that "listeners to programs

of purely entertainment variety ... now represent the bulk of the market." (Feb. 1932, p. 2) This comment was made within a decade of the first commercial station in North America signing on -- a decade which saw radio broadcasting advance from a largely information-based media to a phenomenon grounded in entertainment.

Listeners in Alberta had numerous radio stations from which to choose, and by 1932 magazines such as *Radioland* were carrying full listings for local as well as national and international stations. Until 1948, when Alberta received its first 50,000 watt station with the CBC affiliate CBX in Lacombe, stations from the United States were often easier to receive in Alberta than the local stations[20].

The quest for higher-powered stations started much earlier in the United States than it did in Canada. In 1932, while Canadian stations were still 5000 watts or less, 50,000 watt stations were appearing frequently in the United States. The most powerful station on the continent, however, originated from Aconia, Mexico -- radio station XER with a power output of 75,000 watts. Because of the limited interference from other sources (such as we have today with computers, micro-waves, and cluttered radio airwaves), a station with as little as 100 watts could in 1932 be heard great distances away. Therefore, stations with greater power were even easier

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[20] Even though this was the case loyalty to the local broadcasting facility still remained high.

to receive. In Alberta, national programmes from the United States were heard best on "KFI, Los Angeles; KOA, Denver; KHQ, Spokane; KPO, San Francisco; KOMO, Seattle; KSL, Salt Lake City; KVI, Tacoma; KDYL, Salt Lake City; KOIN, Portland; [and] KJR, Seattle." (*Radioland*, Feb. 1932, p. 7)

Various ways to determine the number of listeners to a particular station or network started to emerge in the late 1920s. These included phone calls, mail-outs, and elaborate devices attached to the radio which beamed a signal back to a central location indicating when a radio was on, and to which station it was tuned. In 1934 Fred Butler, editor of *Radex* (The Radio Index), wrote an article in which he gave an early account of radio ratings:

> Recently the telephone company in Cleveland had its operator call 210 homes on 18 of its residential exchanges. This was done on a Monday night during the hour when Bing Crosby was on one local station and Lawrence Tibbett on another. Here were two top-notch programs of two entirely different sorts. As people answered, the operator asked them to which of these programs they were listening at the moment. The results ought to provide some pretty solid food for reflection on the part of the powers that have invested fortunes in the business of broadcasting.
>
> Of the 210 homes called, 81 did not answer. Here were almost 40% of this cross-section of the population who found other things of more interest than the radio.
>
> Of the 129 who responded, 64 did not have their radio sets turned on! In the best radio hour of the evening, with the top artists of their class on the air, *almost fifty per cent of the people weren't even listening.*
>
> Of the sixty-five, one didn't have a radio set, one didn't know what he was listening to, 36 were tuned to Tibbett, 19 to Crosby and seven to a third network...
>
> The serious thing about this check is that of

> 210 homes, only 30 per cent were listening to the radio! Fifty per cent of the radio receivers were shut off! ...
>
> What is wrong? Pick any ten persons and ask them that question and these are the replies you will get 1. Too much advertising. 2. Too much mediocrity. 3. Too much sameness. (*RaDex*, March 1, 1934, p. 7)

Fourteen years later the three problems mentioned by Butler still existed and were also now apparent in Canada. Denny Brown wrote:

> The I.O.D.E. [Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire] which takes a serious interest in serious Canadian problems recently has been showing broadcasters the results of a survey among its members on what is wrong with Canadian radio. ... The report suggests that: the time allotted commercials be cut by 50 per cent. That good recorded music is preferred to second-rate talent; and on the other hand, that more encouragement be given Canadian talent. That horror stories and soap serials be eliminated. That more good comedians be used but that good musicians do not try to be comedians. That more light opera be played; that more band music be played; that more good books be reviewed; that good musical programs be allowed a half hour rather than 15 minutes; that the "sugar-daddy" type of comment reserved by announcers for women artists cheapens and detracts from the program; that fewer hill-billy programs be provided; that more programs with a Canadian background be provided; that one night a week be set aside as "family night." (*Calgary Herald*, Feb. 7, 1948, p. 5)

Unfortunately, private opinion polls seldom swayed the decisions made by radio programmers. Instead, audience measurement firms such as the Hooper Company, the Elliot-Haynes Audience Survey, the Neilsen Survey, the Cooperative Analysis of Broadcasting (CAB), and the Bureau of Broadcast Measurement (BBM), among others, supplied the numbers by which radio programs were justified.

The Bureau of Broadcast Measurement came into existence in 1948 and has become the Canadian standard for radio and television ratings. Prior to 1956, surveys were completed every second year. The information contained in Table IV has been derived from the first BBM survey for Alberta and is a calculation of province-wide listening patterns based on a maximum reach of 202,260 homes with radios. The survey was based on mail-outs to census areas indicated in Map 1. Because radio license fees were still being collected in 1948, it was felt that fairly accurate ratings could be obtained.

The steps taken to compile the information in the BBM survey included calculating the number of radios in a given area; sending ballots to a percentage of the population; and finally tabulating the returned ballots and issuing the results to the subscribing stations[21].

The 1948 BBM survey helps to identify the stations being heard and the times (day or evening) when people were listening. The survey is separated into categories for day and night, and urban and rural listeners. This information was important to programmers and helped them gear specific

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[21] For example: an area contains 1000 radios. 100 ballots are sent to people living in the area. Once the ballots have been returned a percentage is based on the information supplied by the listener. If 50 ballots are returned, and 25 of them listen to "Station X" and 5 of them listen to "Station Y", then the assumption is made that of the 1000 radios 500 (or 50% of the returns) are tuned to "Station X", and 100 (or 10% of the returns) are tuned to "Station Y".

Table IV - Calculations from 1948 BBM Ratings

Station	Areas (45)	Total - Day	Total - Night	Urban - Day	Urban - Night
CFCN	45	122740	124330	31730	34240
CJCA	36	112810	108360	25800	26470
CFAC	33	89990	81590	30190	29360
CFRN	30	86410	84110	24970	26370
CJCJ	21	48620	44000	22300	22300
CBK	36	35940	27660	2790	2450
CJOC	15	31420	27270	5410	4870
CFQC	14	11600	7630	420	LT
CFGP	6	10150	9220	380	340
KSL	45	8820	71430	LT	20130
CHAT	5	8720	7150	2840	2680
KIRO	37	5840	38240	50	12910
CHAB	9	4580	2200	380	LT
KOA	42	3510	57400	460	19450
CKCK	8	3040	1330	LT	LT
KFBB	3	2500	2190	LT	LT
KOJM	4	1350	LT	460	LT
CKBI	2	1070	670	LT	LT
CKRM	1	240	LT	LT	LT
KNX	7	LT	3300	LT	840
KOMO	4	LT	1600	LT	LT
CBR	2	LT	1210	LT	LT
CKUA	31	NS	NS	NS	NS
CJDC	1	NS	NS	NS	NS
KGA	1	NS	NS	NS	NS

programs to the time of day when they would be best received[22]. The difference in programming attitude between the United States and Canada meant listeners in Alberta had a wide range of programs to choose from at any given time. In the United States very little experimental programming was aired in prime-time as advertisers and programmers did not want to take a chance of losing the share of the potential

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[22] An examination of the BBM survey shows twenty-five different stations attracted an audience in Alberta in 1948. Of those, nine originated in Alberta, eight were from the United States, six broadcast from Saskatchewan, and two from British Columbia. A further analysis shows nine of the top ten stations are Canadian in the total daytime audiences, the tenth being KSL from Salt Lake City. In the urban centres alone, the top ten stations during the day all originate from Canada. At night, the listening patterns change drastically, with three United States stations appearing in the top eight: KSL at number 5; KOA at number 6; and KIRO at number 8. In the Urban centres at night KSL is number 6; KOA is number 7 and KIRO remains at number 8. Two of the United States stations, KSL and KIRO were both CBS affiliates, KOA belonged to the NBC network. The ABC subscriber, KGA from Spokane, was a Non-Subscriber and was not rated in the 1948 survey. The highest position reached by the CBC affiliate is in the Total-Day column at number 6. This is potentially misleading as CBC programmes were still carried to a greater or lesser extent by all stations in Alberta in 1948. This changed after the fall of 1948 when the CBC signed on CBX, their 50,000 watt transmitter in Lacombe, Alberta. Prior to CBX the closest CBC affiliate to Alberta was CBK in Watrous, Saskatchewan. In April of 1948 it was reported:

> Come July 1, Calgary listeners still will hear most of their favourite CBC programs -- [Charlie] McCarthy to [Fibber] McGee [and Molly] on CFAC ... it seems most network advertisers refuse to accept the new Lacombe 50,000 watt outlet as their sole Alberta mouth-piece ... Meanwhile the corporation still refuses to admit the fact of radio life -- one 50,000 watt station in the prairies still could do the work of the three super-watters on which the CBC is spending the taxpayers money. (*Calgary Herald*, April 10, 1948, p. 5)

Ten years prior to CBX signing on, questions were raised by H. Gordon Love concerning the amount of CBC programming his station CFCN was receiving compared to the rival station CFAC. H. N. Stovin, Supervisor of Station Relations for the CBC responded by saying:

> Radio station CFAC, Calgary, is committed to carry 42 hours per week of CBC service. In these 42 hours we reserve certain definite periods for CFAC and, in accordance with our agreement, that station is given first choice of the other periods it wishes to carry. Also, all network commercials go to CFAC.

Love's concern stemmed from the fact that the CBC, besides its own quality programs, was also carrying a number of shows from the United States. This meant most of the major network entertainments were available through local radio service. When local advertising dollars were at stake the amount of network shows a particular station carried was often the determining factor in the ratings.

audience. In Canada, on the other hand, experimental programmes such as the CBC *Stage* series, were often heard in prime-time[23]. Radio drama was an essential part of the safe programmes for prime-time and included soap serials during the day, and action-adventure dramas, variety shows, and comedies in the evening.

The programming day in both the United States and Canada was well established by the mid 1930s. Howard Fink points out:

> Of the twenty-six leading evening programmes in the 1939-40 season, twenty were dramatic. In the 1939-40 season the ratio remained very much the same: nineteen out of twenty-five. That proportion had risen steadily from 1930-1, in which only two of the top ten evening programmes had been dramatic. In the daytime there had been a similar rise from 1930; by 1938-39 the top ten included two musical shows, the dramatic serial *The Goldbergs* and seven soaps. (in Lewis, 192)

Two graphs (Figs. 2 and 3) printed in a 1940 issue of *Variety* magazine illustrate graphically the daytime and nighttime network breakdown of programs in the United States[24]. The "Dramas & Serials" portion of the graph, at 84.9% during the day, and 18.4% at night is a significant difference. For the daytime allotment of drama the article claims that

> There was a lot of talk about this being ... unhealthy radio ... but nothing was done about it. Unbalanced or not, too few persons were enough concerned to change the story.

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[23] Howard Fink discussed this topic in detail in his article "The sponsor's v. the nation's choice: North American Radio Drama" in *Radio Drama*, Peter Lewis, ed.

[24] From *Variety*, January 3, 1940, p. 91.

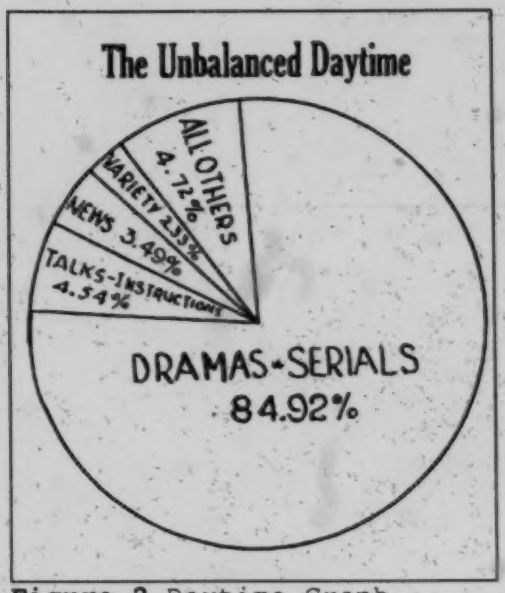

Figure 2 Daytime Graph

The article goes on to point out that

> In contrast to the unbalance of the morning-afternoon stretch, the network program schedule after dark is varied and in accord with commonly accepted notions of arranging entertainment to prevent any one type of turn from over-prominence.

Variety was not the only publication which pointed out the overabundance of daytime soap dramas. In the years after the *Variety* graphs were published, Denny Brown, in the *Calgary Herald's* "Western Airwaves" column, often supplied short and pointed jabs at the daytime serials. There were, however, many listeners who for various reasons were tolerant of the abundance of soap serials during the day. In 1948, Brown, after receiving a letter from one such listener, wrote the following:

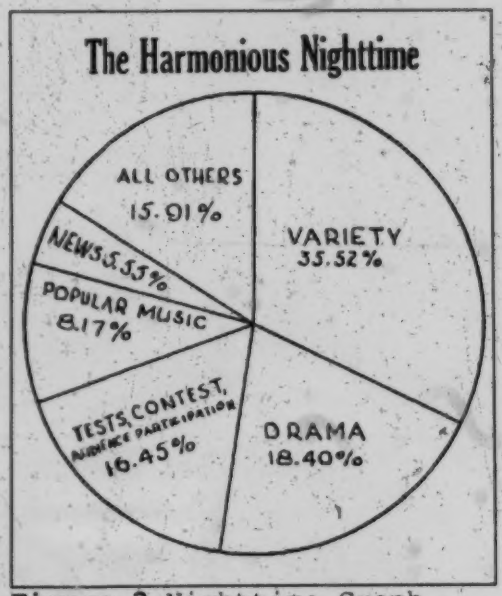

Figure 3 Nighttime Graph

> Mrs. Hazel Cheyne, of Clive, dropped a line this week, disagreeing with this department's opinion of soap serials and suggesting that the monotony,

> especially in current comedy, is because "after so many such programs being aired for so long, writers simply can't think up anything any more." That seems a perfect summary of the situation. She adds that living 12 or 16 miles from the nearest movie and not having the pastimes of the urban centres, makes country listeners more tolerant of programs broadcast locally. I often feel the program people take advantage of that very tolerance. (*Calgary Herald*, July 3, 1948, p. 5)

A considerable number of listeners must have tolerated the programming, as the daytime soap operas, in their usual fifteen-minute radio format, continued to draw large audiences, and large sponsorships (mainly from soap companies) until their television counterparts finally replaced them in popularity.

For radio drama to work effectively, the audience must always be kept in mind. In a letter to Alberta writer Sheilagh Jameson, Hazel Robinson, script editor with the Department of Education School Broadcasts Division, says "radio drama writing has one insistent demand; that you remember your audience, always. That means writing in pictures, making the ear, as it were, visualize places, scenes, situations." (Jameson, *Personal Papers*) Doug Homersham agrees, and from a producer's point of view states,

> As far as radio is concerned your first concern is your audience. You look at your script and you say "how appealing is this script going to be on radio? Is it flexible enough to be well produced? Or are you handicapped to make a good production out of it?" You have to look at many things: you have to look at your cast, you have to look at your sound effects. And you also have to think in terms of how well the script is written. Radio, of course, was something that [used the] imagination. You were able to sit there and imagine what was happening.

> ... I think that was very important. If you want to have somebody walking up steps you would hear the echo of the steps but you didn't see them. There was much more to it than if you could see them walking up steps. You could see anybody walking up steps any day but just to hear the effects of those steps echoing, and what they meant, was important. (Homersham, *PI*)

For Homersham, Robinson, and many others, the audience was of foremost importance. For the network programmers, unfortunately, the bottom line of financial return was often the most important aspect. Radio drama was caught in the middle. On one hand there were writers, producers, and actors who wanted to create new and exciting dramas. On the other hand there were those who, once they had found the formula for success, wanted to keep with the tried and true methods.

George Robertson in his 1959 article "Drama on the Air" expressed his concerns with where radio drama had arrived. He writes,

> What has happened is that many writers are content to make the same tired patterns in the sand; radio...drama has become an imitation of an imitation of an imitation of life -- you can take it to any power you like. And we are back to one of the functions of the broadcast arts, to lull us to sleep with the old nursery rhymes. If drama is to be more than this, it will come not from writers who are more and more skilled in the intricacies of production methods (which can only teach the writer to fear real experiment, not to attempt it) but from writers who have an original view of the world and pursue the consequences of that view to the top and bottom of the souls of their characters. With this clearly seen, there is argument enough for any play, of any kind. (*Canadian Literature*, No. 2, Autumn, 1959, p. 64)

Robertson's argument, although valid, fell short as he failed to realize the power of popular opinion. Experimentation

worked in 1919 when the first commercial radio stations were coming into existence, but with the advancement of advertising and ratings, experimentation became a risky venture, and for the most part was reserved for time slots where it would cause the least amount of potential financial loss. Experimentation in prime time still did happen on occasion: CFAC's *Wednesday Night Playhouse* is a good example, as are many of the plays which appeared in the *Stage* series, produced by Andrew Allan, on the CBC. But these dramas did not always command the biggest share of the audience. After the size of audience a station or network had became the foremost concern programmes were geared to attract that audience. For radio drama it was the safe escapist entertainment programmes which commanded the advertising dollar.

Map 1 Census Areas from 1948 BBM Survey

Radio Drama: Perspective of a Writer

Although ratings were of great importance to management, advertisers, and producers, they were usually of little consequence to the writers[25]. Many quality writers existed in Canada during the golden age of radio, but of the writers who were successful in writing while residing in Alberta, Elsie Park Gowan was one of the most prolific. This chapter will deal specifically with Gowan and her contribution to radio drama: a contribution which spanned thirty years, and which was heard on four continents. Gowan has in past years been more widely known for her contributions to the stage, even though her offerings to radio outweigh her stage works considerably. Her radio plays gave Gowan a voice she never achieved on stage. In her radio dramas, Gowan was the teacher, the enlightened voice of women in post-war Canada[26], and above all the historian[27].

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[25] Although ratings may mean the difference to whether a writer is able to pursue his craft or not, most writers do not have ratings in mind when they are drafting a script. Inevitably the final product rests in the hands of the producer who depends on the writer to supply a good product on which to build a better product.

[26] A forthcoming collection of Gowan's plays, edited by Moira Day, will more closely explore the female characters in Gowan's radio plays. Day's selection of plays will help the reader to look specifically at attitudes towards women and their roles in pre- and post-war Canada.

[27] In an article Elsie Park Gowan wrote in 1975 called "History Into Theatre", she relates the variety of ways one may go about researching history. She concludes the list by writing, "if your subject lies within this century, you may be lucky enough to interview men and women who were *there*. This is pure gold". (Gowan, *History*, p. 7) I interviewed Gowan on May 21, 1991 concerning her radio career. She was right; it was pure gold.

Elsie Park Gowan was born in Scotland in 1905 and moved with her family to Edmonton when she was seven. Her interest in history, and the prospect of teaching, pushed her toward the University of Alberta where she received a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1930. Her teaching career, however, started eight years before she obtained her degree. "In those days, in the summer time," Gowan comments, "a student could go out to some remote backwoods joint where they couldn't have school in the winter because there weren't any roads, and teach for five months, at a hundred dollars a month, and make enough dough to come back to varsity". (Gowan, *PI*) Gowan spent the summers of 1922 through 1926 in this fashion, and after receiving her degree, continued to teach both summer and winter sessions, depending on where she could secure employment. The Peace River country, St. Paul, Rocky Mountain House, Marlboro, and Kananaskis were among the areas where Gowan honed her teaching skills. Although all teaching was challenging and profitable for Gowan, it was teaching in French schools which was the eye opener, and turned out to be more profitable than she had thought it would be. Later radio scripts which she set in Quebec (a province she had not visited at the time) were based on the information she gathered from her French students. So comprehensive was the data she gained from her pupils that a Jesuit Father congratulated the producer, and commented on the subject of one of her 1937 French-Canadian scripts as "the first time an English radio station had recognized [that]

Canada began with us". (Gowan, *PI*)

Radio was not, at first, a major force in Gowan's life. She knew of its existence, as did most of the population, but she was not always in a position to tune in to the broadcasts. From 1922 to 1926, a number of radio stations signed on in Alberta, but rural listeners without electricity required battery-operated equipment, an expense many had to do without before, during, and after the Great Depression. Gowan remembers a terrible winter she spent in Marlboro, west of Edson, without the magical wireless. She says of the experience, "I often think how different my life would have been if there had been some radio" (Gowan, *PI*), a theory she was able to test in subsequent years. Gowan stayed with relatives one winter in what is now Kananaskis and taught at the village school. Her uncle Fred was the manager of Calgary Power. Being familiar with the technical workings of electricity, he owned a radio and had installed a horn on it so everybody could "listen in". Gowan recalls Uncle Fred's radio vividly, and the Calgary radio station they were able to receive on it, when she says, "the first piece of music I remember hearing on the radio was 'Markita, when day is done, I hear you call, Markita, da de da da da da da...'." (Gowan, *PI*) Prior to 1930, music, information, and commercial content made up the average broadcast day. Radio drama was still in its experimental stage, and was unknown to Gowan until later, when she started writing it herself.

Elsie Park Gowan's introduction to radio drama started with a phone call from CKUA's program manager, Sheila Marryat, who was described by Gowan as "a very dominating lady". According to Gowan, the conversation was "'Elsie, you've taken a degree in history, and you've written some plays for stage, I want you to write some radio plays.' And I said 'radio plays? What's that?'" (Gowan, *PI*) For Gowan's introduction to radio scripts Marryat had decided on a series which would explore leaders in the field of human activity. Names which were mentioned for the scripts included Florence Nightingale, Christopher Wren, Ludwig Von Beethoven, and Elizabeth Fry. Gowan's writing partner in this initial endeavour was Gwen Pharis Ringwood, who had been contacted separately by Marryat. Those first twenty scripts became known under the series name *New Lamps for Old*. Gowan and Ringwood split the writing evenly at ten scripts each, taking approximately two weeks to write each one (including the required research), and received for their efforts the sum of five dollars per script. Their remuneration increased to twenty-five dollars per script when the series was broadcast nationally by the CBC.

New Lamps for Old ran in 1936-7[28] on an Alberta network, comprised of Edmonton station CKUA and Calgary station CFCN, and was broadcast the following year by the CBC over the

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[28] An exact date for these broadcasts is hard to identify. Most sources seem to agree on the dates 1936-7. The radio listings in both the *Edmonton Journal* and the *Calgary Herald*, however, do not identify *New Lamps for Old* until January 12, 1937. The *Herald* listing continues for 17 consecutive Tuesday evenings, ending May 11, 1937.

western network, which was comprised of stations from Winnipeg west. The programs were produced in Edmonton by Sheila Marryat under less than perfect conditions[29] with practically no equipment, and used local Edmonton talent (the CKUA Players, sometimes referred to as the University Players). Comments from radio colleagues concerning the programs ranged from "who are these people?" (Gowan, *PI*), to accolades for the two writers from W. S. Milne in his *Drama* section of *Letters in Canada*. Of Gwen Pharis Ringwood, he wrote:

> She is the author of a number of excellent radio dramatizations of biographical material for the University of Alberta, produced over station CKUA in a series *New Lamps for Old*. They strike one as infinitely better than anything of the sort heard over Eastern stations. (*Letters... :1936*, 373)

The following year the praise went to Gowan when Milne stated:

> There have been written in Canada during 1937 some radio scripts of a very high order. Especially notable is the series *New Lamps for Old*, by Elsie Park Gowan ... [The episodes] educate, painlessly, and they are excellent entertainment at the same time ... One has to confess that the Eastern stations have not yet discovered as brilliant a script-writer as has CKUA, the station of the University of Alberta. (*Letters... :1937*, 367)

Comments from listeners were equally positive, and Gowan says "it was really quite a thrill to get letters from somebody in Nova Scotia, or somebody in Victoria saying 'we heard your story'." (Gowan, *PI*) Although the Edmonton actors who were

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[29] According to Elsie Park Gowan, Marryat did quite a bit of drama, using BBC scripts, or adaptations of stage plays which she "produced in this crazy old studio in the engineering building [on the University of Alberta campus]. The room was ... draped in burlap ... because it was supposed to be good for the sound, and one mike, and all the sound effects were hand-made."

involved did not go on to national recognition, they were instrumental in helping establish a form of 'educational radio drama' which continued into the 1960s. The series also secured many years of work for Elsie Park Gowan. She feels that *New Lamps For Old* on the CBC network established her reputation with the Corporation, and points out that after the series finished, the CBC sent her assignments continuously. She says, "I never had to think, what am I going to write about next. There was a letter saying 'we're having a series of school broadcasts will you please write this', or 'we are having a series on mental health, or new Canadians, or something'." (Gowan, *PI*) Over the next twenty years, Gowan wrote, in her estimate, about two hundred radio scripts for the CBC and other networks[30]. She always felt grateful that the CBC was interested in her work. As she points out:

> It was very difficult for the CBC to deal with writers who were thousands of miles away. I could see their point, it was much easier for the executive people ... to call up Tommy Tweed, who was right there in Toronto and talk to him about what they had in mind, instead of writing letters to somebody in Alberta, so I always felt I was damn lucky that they bothered. (Gowan, *PI*)

They did bother, however, and continued to do so for over twenty years.

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[30] Anton Wagner claims Gowan wrote "approximately 250 radio scripts over ... twenty years" (*EPG*, 71). Wagner's "preliminary checklist" of Elsie Park Gowan plays (published 1987) includes the titles of 97 plays. I have used Wagner's checklist as a foundation and have added over 120 titles to the list, bringing the total to over two hundred. This is still, I believe, an incomplete list, and therefore maintain Wagner's claim of "approximately 250" as a reasonable estimate. These titles are found in the appendices.

During the second season of *New Lamps For Old*, Sheila Marryat started Elsie Park Gowan on what many, including Gowan herself, consider her major work: *The Building of Canada*. In a twenty-episode series, Gowan traced the political development of Canada from 1608 to 1938. The series, produced in Edmonton, was broadcast over CKUA during the 1937-8 season and over the national network of the CBC during 1938-9. Later reviewers, obviously not familiar with Gowan's work, claim her career began with *The Building of Canada*. Like *New Lamps for Old*, *The Building of Canada* series was important to radio drama[31] in this country by bringing its history to the average listener in a manner both entertaining and informative. Prior to these series historical coverage was usually accomplished by means of lectures.

As was the case in the second year of *New Lamps for Old*, Gowan was paid twenty-five dollars per script. She remembers the effect the arrangement had on her:

> When I got the contract to write *The Building of Canada*, the idea of 20 scripts at 25 dollars a

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[31] The *Building of Canada* was popular in other media as well. Three of the plays were later published in the grade school readers. Elsie was approached by the editors of the school texts who told her they were looking for more Canadian material. She handed them a stack of *The Building of Canada* scripts. After reviewing the scripts the editors decided to use her script on "Sir Walter Raleigh in Grade seven, Alexander Machans in grade eight, and Confederation in grade nine." (Gowan, *PI*) Elsie feels the scripts had more of an effect in the school readers than they had on the air, which she emphasizes with this anecdote concerning the scripts:

> I remember one day the grocery boy came, (in those days the grocers delivered), and he handed in the stuff, and then sort of stood around, and then said, "We did your play in school today." "Oh," I said "That's interesting". And then he said, "I was Sir John A. Macdonald", and he grew about six inches, you know. So I felt I had not lived in vain. (Gowan, *PI*)

> script was riches. I took the whole family to the supper dance at the 'Mac' [Hotel Macdonald in Edmonton]. The supper dance at the 'Mac' was the top of the town, and any young person who got there was, you know, 'in'. I had three good-looking sisters all with good-looking, dancing husbands, so we could all go out and have a ball, just the eight of us. (Gowan, *PI*)

Five hundred dollars in 1938 may have been considered riches to Gowan, but was a relatively minor sum when compared to the annual salaries the top radio writers would earn by the mid-1940's. In a 1946 article titled "Radio's Unknowns", Frank Chamberlain points out that radio writing is a "field that today is paying script writers $5,000 to $15,000 a year. Three or four are making $20,000, although those making the big money also broadcast the stuff they write." (*New World Illustrated*, Feb. 1946, p. 22) Gowan was not one of the writers who attained the level of financial status Chamberlain mentions, for two reasons: first, she was subsidized by her professor-husband's salary, and second, the type of drama she was writing (for her an avocation, not an occupation) took too much research and too long to write to make it financially feasible. The latter was one of the major contributing factors to Gowan's sudden departure from writing. When her husband died in 1958, he left a small pension, but according to Gowan, it "was not adequate [for me to] go on living the way I was living." (Gowan, *PI*) When the offer came from the Edmonton Public School Board asking her to teach creative writing at the high school level, Gowan accepted and embarked on an eleven-year teaching career at Ross Sheppard Composite High

School. She says it was "one of the few places where a person could do some real educating because the classes were small and I could sit down and talk to the kids one at a time." (Gowan, *PI*) For Gowan, effective teaching and effective radio writing both demanded high one-to-one communication skills.

Although radio writing occupied most of her career, Elsie Park Gowan began by writing stage plays, which she continued to do, and during the 1950's and 1960's she even tried her hand at television scripts. For her, "the similarities are greater than the differences in the different media." (Gowan, *PI*) She feels that "the structure and basis of any play is good suspense, good conflict. You establish the main conflict, whether it's a play for the stage, radio, television, or whatever." (Gowan, *PI*) For Gowan, a scenario helped her to organize her thoughts:

> First scene: who's in it, what point is made? Second scene, who are the players, how does this advance the story? Final scene, solve the problem, answer the question, resolve the conflict. Whatever you're writing, that's the basic structure of drama. (Gowan, *PI*)

Beyond structure, content was equally if not more important. Content required a great deal of research. Gowan feels writers should know more about the subject than they actually put in the play as "part of the background." The vehicle Gowan used to convey her message to the listener often involved inventing a family. If the subject of the play was based on a particular individual, however, Gowan turned to familiarity to develop her point. She cites as an example one of the episodes from

New Lamps for Old:

> Take the script I gave on Elizabeth Fry: the women who went into the worst of the English prisons and befriended the 'so-called' convicts there, and helped them to have some self-respect. That situation is perfectly normal, and is still here. Of course the conditions aren't as bad as they were then, but jail is jail. (Gowan, *PI*)

Although Gowan knew what she needed to do structurally to relay her messages, the form her early plays took was often uneven. In retrospect, Gowan recognizes how much she developed as a writer, and says "when I read those early plays, they make my hair curl." (Gowan, *PI*) She makes that comment in reference to her apparent lack of concern about location in her early scripts. In her first script for the *New Lamps for Old* series, Gowan wrote about Erasmus of Rotterdam, a character who, in a half-hour episode, travelled over half of Europe. She says:

> I took the stand that he was the first European. He believed that there could be such a thing as someone loyal to Europe and that national boundaries were stupid [and] ... I cheerfully had him go from Holland to England to Switzerland, without bothering to put in any narration. In those days ... if he met Henry VIII, obviously he was in England. Or you would have somebody say "In the four years you've been in Switzerland..." Nowadays you would just simply have a narrator, and there would be no fuss and bother. (Gowan, *PI*)

In her second series, *The Building of Canada*, Gowan developed a device she would use for the greater percentage of her remaining plays: the family. In the twenty episodes of *The Building of Canada*, we were introduced to two families: the Morells and the Steeles, the former a French-Canadian family,

the latter English-speaking. Gowan comments:

> Everything that happened in Canada happened to these people, they were involved in one way or another. In the Confederation script I had one of the Steele boys, who was a newspaper reporter for Kingston, sitting in the 'Mac' looking at the picture of the Fathers of Confederation, and saying "My Great Granddaddy tried to report that story" and so on. The use of the two families gave it a kind of personal touch. (Gowan, *PI*)

For Gowan, the family did not necessarily have to be related. For her, the community was often synonymous with family.

One of her early community-based series was broadcast over the CBC Trans-Canada Network during the 1943-4 season. Entitled *The Town Grows Up*[32], it featured plays which focused on community and specifically "civic utilities, the water-works, the fire brigade, the police, the school system, the library, everything that we do together as a community effort." (Gowan, *PI*) One newspaper reviewer called it "the interwoven pattern of life in a modern Canadian city" (Gowan, *PS*, 102[33]), and another said, "the series...is designed to show the human side to the progress of the manifold public and social utilities of modern times." (Gowan, *PS*, 102) In this series, Gowan wanted to show "that people working together can build something that no one effort, no one separate guy could

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[32] Gowan originally wanted to call the series *From the Town Clock*, but was advised the title "would not sufficiently identify the program." (Frick, *Letter to EPG*).

[33] The page numbers indicated are from my own *Elsie Park Gowan Microfiche Index* which catalogues the ten micro-fiche collection of Elsie's personal scrapbooks located in the University of Alberta Archives. Both the Scrapbooks, and Index are listed in the bibliography.

do." (Gowan, *PI*) Each episode of *The Town Grows Up* began with a narrator, John Evans, a retired postmaster, played by Frank Peddie. Gowan says of the narrator:

> I used to put him in the post office clock [tower] where he could see the whole town around him. [He would say] "See those people going into that building, what are they looking for, what do they want?" And then the voice of the people [would be heard] saying what they wanted. (Gowan, *PI*)

Gowan gives an example of how this technique worked by citing from the episode she wrote about the library (one of her personal favourites). In this episode, as in the others, she "started with the old man seeing these four people going into the building. 'What did they want, what were they looking for?'". (Gowan, *PI*) Gowan's research had led her to understand they would be looking for one of four things: "entertainment, technical information, philosophy, and psychology [or] self-help." (Gowan, *PI*) Each of the four items would be covered by one of the characters. The scene moves to the first character, Trudy, who is looking for entertainment:

> She is asked, "What do you want, Trudy?" And Trudy says, "I want a wonderful story," and she starts reading *Pilgrim's Progress* "Now there was not far from the place where they lay a castle called Doubting Castle, the owner was Giant Despair..." (Gowan, *PI*)

In this manner, Gowan was able to discuss the relevance and importance of the community library system through four people. In a similar fashion, in the same series, she tackled issues such as unemployment insurance, social security, low-rent housing, as well as the topics mentioned above. Series

like *The Town Grows Up*, or others, including *In Search of Ourselves* and *In Search of Citizens*, were developed from the CBC's ongoing effort to "find out what people wanted to listen to". (Gowan, *PI*) Gowan says the critics of the Corporation often felt that the CBC was "shoving things down our throats." (Gowan, *PI*) In her opinion, however, the CBC was really exploring the answer to such questions as "what do the people want right now, what's on their minds?" (Gowan, *PI*) Because it was a process of exploration, and because there were so many questions to be answered, the CBC quest turned radio drama into a writer's market.

Market conditions helped convince Gowan to continue writing for radio. Her first love was and remains stage plays, but during the golden age of radio the market was open, and there was always "somebody willing to buy [our scripts]". (Gowan, *PI*) The CBC was divided into two sections: educational (often under the auspices of the school broadcast section); and entertainment. The two departments worked independently of each other, although writers, producers and actors often worked in both. Gowan concentrated on educational material, but was among those writers with dual credits. In certain instances, Gowan combined education and entertainment, and with the help of her 'Gowan Family' was often successful. For two seasons (1947-9) Gowan wrote a weekly serial about Canadians called *The Barlows of Beaver Street*. The programs, heard Monday nights, "were acted in Montreal and beamed to the

British Isles by the CBC International service from Sackville, New Brunswick." (Don Flach, *Edmonton Bulletin*, Dec. 18, 1948, p. 14) Gowan recounts the background of the series:

> The BBC were sending us *Mrs. Dale's Diary* which was a sort of soapless soap program that happened in an English rural community, and *Coronation Street*, which was sort of urban, down-to-earth stuff. They said we should be sending them, on our short wave, something of the same nature. I was chosen for the job, and I invented the Barlows. Father worked in the packing plant [an] engineer in the refrigeration plant of Burns. Mother was the typically intelligent housewife who's beginning to feel she's got to get over her doorstep and into the bigger larger world. Then there was one daughter who was a newspaper writer and that, of course, got me anywhere. The other daughter was a nice little girl who was engaged to ... a French Canadian which gave us all that background. Then there was a high-school boy of sixteen. Then there was the Air Force boy, the eldest son, [who] was just home from the Air Force and he had married an English war bride. You see what I was trying to do I was trying to cover the waterfront with six people. We alternated the central character [who became] the narrator in each section. I didn't get much feedback, but I know some cousins of mine in Scotland had heard one of the plays and they were quite thrilled. (Gowan, *PI*)

The British Isles were just one of many areas of the world which heard the words of Elsie Park Gowan.

In 1944, prior to the *Barlows*, the Australian Broadcasting Commission paid her twelve guineas[34] for her scripts *Canada Comes of Age* and *Road To Alaska*, from the series *Lands of the Free*. In addition the series was aired in 1943 as part of the NBC Inter-American University of the Air and was heard in Canada on Sunday afternoons and "beamed by short wave to

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[34] In the Elsie Park Gowan Scrapbooks, a copy of a cheque for $88.70 Canadian was found as payment for the series.

South America." (Wagner, *EPG*, 71) The CBC had been asked to contribute five scripts for the University of the Air, a task which fell to Gowan, something she feels was "quite a feather in the cap." (Gowan, *PI*) The topics Gowan explored in the five episodes included clipper ships, the relationship between Canada and the United States, Canada coming of age, and the road to Alaska. For the latter script Gowan had

> Two guys, the American and the Canadian, sitting up in a camp on the Alaskan Highway talking about building the road to Alaska, and sort of casting their minds back, with flashbacks, to various episodes in the relationship of the two countries. (Gowan, *PI*)

Writing the five episodes was not an easy task as Gowan relates:

> [The CBC] took me down to Toronto and put me in a room in the King Edward Hotel, and said "produce five scripts". I couldn't do it. I didn't know where to look for my research. It was ridiculous. I could have done a far better job at home. I think I wrote two and a half, and then went home and did the rest. But the CBC were satisfied with the job we did on them. (Gowan, *PI*)

By 1944, and for the next several years, the high demand for quality material, and the speed at which it was required, was sometimes difficult on Gowan, as well as on writers all over the country.

One of the producers who demanded and received high quality was Andrew Allan. According to Gowan and others, when Allan "was at his prime he was doing the best English-speaking radio in the world". (Gowan, *PI*) Gowan first met Andrew Allan while he was working in Vancouver. She says,

> I didn't know the guy at all but I assumed because he was so good and had such a prestige, that he must be quite old, or middle age. And the first time I met him I stared at him in astonishment -- here was this cherubic face, these big enormous blue eyes, he looked so innocent and so youthful, I couldn't believe that this was Andrew Allan, but it was. He was a meticulous director. In his studio nobody was called by their first name. When they came together everything was put on ice. He was Mr. Allan, and you were Mr. Lewis, and so on. It was very formal and very, I want to say, reserved. (Gowan, *PI*)

Prior to their meeting Allan had produced some of Gowan's "ordinary entertainment scripts." Their initial meeting came on the day he was producing a ghost story she had adapted from a Francis Dickie story about old Quebec called *Family Reunion*. Gowan recalls of that experience:

> [Andrew] believed in manual reaction. [In *Family Reunion*] somebody picked up a skull ... and when the girl was supposed to pick [it] up, he handed her a cantaloupe. The idea was, he wanted her to have the feeling of having a round and hard object. (Gowan, *PI*)

For Gowan the golden age of radio was Andrew Allan: a golden age she feels began with *Stage '44* and continued through the next twelve seasons. Andrew Allan was also aware of the control *Stage* was having on radio drama in Canada. Two years after the series began he was quoted as saying, "a person hasn't graduated into drama until he has done a show for *Stage '46*." (Long, *Letter...*) For Gowan and many others, radio drama was redefined by the *Stage* series, and she says that when it was on "you never knew what was going to come out of the box." (Gowan, *PI*) Gowan illustrates the effect the show had, not only on the Canadian listener, but on visitors from the United

States as well, when she says,

> There were two boys who came up from Hollywood to teach at the Banff School, the two boys who wrote *Inherit the Wind*, Jerry Lawrence and Robert E. Lee, and they said that they were amazed at the fact that these off-beat shows like Andrew's *Brown Bags* were put on at good times, in prime time. They said "shows like that in the States get put on at midnight, when nobody's listening." (Gowan, *PI*)

In the third season of *Stage* Andrew Allan decided to expand the format of the series from half-hour episodes to hour-long shows. Because of this, many writers turned to adaptations of other works in order to help fill the quota of plays being demanded. Alice Frick, in *Image in the Mind: CBC Radio Drama 1944 to 1954* says that Allan

> ...planned *Stage '47* to include, in the one-hour format, works from the world's literature, past and present; drama, fiction and poetry presented in radio adaptation. Along with these would be original works by Canadians, who, in the extended programme, would have the chance to tackle more complex themes, to extend ideas and characterization, to write at greater length and make plays which would have been impossible to realize in the enforced brevity of the earlier format. (78)

But the high demand for scripts became too great for many writers. Frick explains this further by relating a conversation she had with Lister Sinclair in 1981:

> Sinclair...argued that it was detrimental to Canadian playwrights and their growth, as well as to the series itself. An hour-long play takes much longer to write than two half-hours, and writers suffered a recession in their earnings unless they took time out from original writing to prepare adaptations. (79)

The new format also had an effect on listeners and reviewers. Within weeks of the conclusion of the *Stage '47*

season, Ralph Novak, in an article titled "Radio Drama in Canada", levelled a blast at the program:

> This year especially, instead of original work, fresh and enthusiastic, we have had feeble imitations, clever compromises, almost anything but the real thing. One hesitates to accuse a five-year old of senility. But it is surely a sign of debility that almost half the plays presented this year have been adaptations and revivals instead of original works. And of the originals, many have fallen into the mould of the well-made play ... utter middle class banality. (31)

It would be another three seasons before Gowan graduated to the *Stage* series, something she did only once, with an hour-long adaptation of her own stage play *The Last Caveman*. The episode was broadcast on May 7, 1950 over the CBC Trans-Canada Network." Alice Frick considered *Caveman* to be one of the "new original plays [in a season where] adaptations outnumbered originals ... [by] more than two to one." (123)

Caveman was originally produced by the Edmonton Little Theatre in 1938, and was later toured by Sydney Risk's Everyman Theatre Company in 1946-7. According to Wagner, the "radio version was closely based on the script for the 1946-47 Everyman Theatre tour with only the occasional expletive sanitized." (*EPG*, 75) Although Gowan had performed adaptations of short stories and novels previous to adapting her own play, she says that adapting *Caveman* for a one-hour radio format was difficult for two reasons: first, "because I was thinking in terms of stage all the time; [and second], *Caveman* is a play which action has a great deal to do with it. The final scene is where they fight. I hate fights on the radio, they are just

so confusing." (Gowan, *PI*) But in this case the fight, as well as the rest of the play, was in good hands -- Andrew Allan's hands. Unfortunately, Gowan never heard how it turned out. The broadcast of *The Last Caveman* happened at the same time she was doing the *Critically Speaking* program about the Dominion Drama Festival in Calgary. She says "I never heard *The Last Caveman* on radio, and nobody else in Canada heard it either, at least the people that count, they were all at the luncheon." (Gowan, *PI*)

While *The Last Caveman* was an adaptation from stage to radio, Gowan had a few years earlier successfully accomplished the reverse, that is, adapted one of her radio plays into a stage play. Doug Homersham, a commercial announcer and producer with CJCA, had put together a group which became known alternately as the *CJCA Players* and the *CJCA Drama Group*. He had decided he "would like to do something worthwhile" (Gowan, *PI*) and approached Gowan with the idea of a series of plays about western Canada. The series became known as *This is Our Heritage*, and although it is not the series for which Doug Homersham became famous, it did contain what Gowan considers to be one of her most successful plays: *Breeches from Bond Street*, a play which is also found with the title *Stage Coach Bride*. Gowan's goal was to write a play about a remittance man, and while doing the research for her chosen topic,

> ...found an incident in a book about early [Fort] McLeod, where this mail order bride got off this

> stage coach and the Mountie who had sent for her decided he didn't want her. He looked at her through his field glass and decided "no, not quite." And he gave his orderly a hundred bucks to give her to go back home. (Gowan, *PI*)

For Gowan, this incident seemed like "the sort of situation in which a remittance man might become involved" (Gowan, *PI*), and based on the idea she wrote the script *Breeches From Bond Street*. Her idea for the title was "when he had [on] his clean breeches he acted like the man they were made for." (Gowan, *PI*) The play is often found with the title *Stage Coach Bride* which Gowan says "I think is probably a better title. *Breeches From Bond Street* tells me the theme of the play, but it is rather confusing to the general public." (Gowan, *PI*)

Breeches was first written as a fifteen-minute radio script for Doug Homersham. Gowan feels the fifteen-minute format was too short to do the script justice. She says "the fifteen minute format is deadly. What can you do in fifteen minutes? The canvas is so small. A half-hour is okay." (Gowan, *PI*) Feeling the script deserved another chance, she "rewrote it into a half hour [radio] play and sold it to [the CBC program] *Buckingham Theatre*[35] for three hundred dollars." (Gowan, *PI*) Gowan feels "the similarities are greater than the differences in the different media", and to test her own theory she rewrote the play again, this time as a one-hour, one-act stage play. She entered it in a Western Canada Theatre

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[35] *Buckingham Theatre* later became known as *Curtain Time*. Often listings for the former are found under the latter.

Conference annual playwriting contest and was awarded third prize and fifty dollars. The stage version was produced in 1949, and published by Samuel French of New York in 1952. The same year the publishing deal was completed, a half-hour version of the stage play (under the title *Stage Coach Bride*) was performed on the television series *On Camera* -- a series which featured various topics and writers.

Television for Gowan did not take away from radio or stage, but was simply another medium waiting to be used. Television, she says "removes all the 'stage setting' you had to do." (Gowan, *PI*) She gives as an example a scene from radio play:

> You and I are having a fight, and I say "I'm going to take this old tea kettle of yours and I'm going to fling it into the fireplace." You don't have to write that any more, you see the guy doing it. Which makes it much easier to concentrate on other things. (Gowan, *PI*)

Gowan wrote little for television: the production of *Stage Coach Bride*, and a show called *Spirit in Stone*, a documentary program about the Northern Alberta Jubilee Auditorium, was written and produced after the completion of the building in 1957. She was not overly interested in writing for television; she "would much rather write for stage, any day ... that's the mother of it all." (Gowan, *PI*) For Gowan, one of her favourite stage experiences happened in Jasper during a production of *The Jasper Story*, a pageant (called a Historama by her musical colleague Jack McCreath) depicting the history of Jasper, which she wrote for the Jasper Chamber of Commerce. The

performances were held in a field on the outskirts of Jasper, and Gowan was standing in the audience one evening watching the production, when she suddenly became very aware of all the beautiful lights, the actors playing, the mountains draped in the background, and the moon glistening above, and she said to herself, "by God, Euripides never had it as good as this. He had an outdoor theatre, but mine's better". (Gowan, *PI*)

The Jasper Story was never produced on radio, although the actors did use the Edmonton studios of CFRN to record all of their parts for use in the show. The audiences that attended *The Jasper Story* witnessed a real and magnificent setting. For her radio plays, Gowan had the option of painting a similar scene in the imaginations of her listeners. For her, the power of radio lies in the fact "you can go anywhere, into people's minds, and up mountains, and down under rivers." (Gowan, *PI*) In radio drama, the content of the play and the medium in which it is expressed must work together.

In 1945 Gowan became discouraged with the writing she was doing. She had spent most of her career either writing historical portraits, or 'writing to order' for the various departments of the CBC, and was feeling she was not being original. She expressed her concerns in a letter to Elizabeth Long, a member of the Programme Division of Women's Interests for the CBC. Long shared Gowan's concerns with Andrew Allan, then wrote in reply, "Andrew Allan was very alarmed that you would entertain the thought that you were not original and

could only write to order. He was indignant also and felt that you needed to come East badly." (Long, *Letter...*) Even with encouraging words from Allan, Gowan still maintained her radio plays were not the voice of her internal authority. She says "I think the only power I ever felt was when I was doing *Critically Speaking*. Going on the air and saying anything you damned well liked about Canadian radio was really quite a challenge." (Gowan, *PI*) Even though radio did have an influential power, Gowan maintains, "I always had the feeling that fifty percent of Canadians weren't listening and didn't give a damn." (Gowan, *PI*) She blames what she perceived as the low numbers of listeners on the bad press that radio received. She states, "the CBC got very bad press right from the beginning. The print media were against it because it was taking their advertising ... and of course if the press was giving us a bad time, it reduced the number of listeners." (Gowan, *PI*) In many areas of Alberta, however, radio was the only source of contact with the outside world, of which Gowan was well aware when she stated:

> The summer I was at Rocky Mountain House, I was living with people who were right on the edge of starvation. They had to go out and shoot a deer if they wanted any meat and hide it under the bed in case the Mounties came around. They were a good family who were having a very rocky time, and the radio was the one thing that kept this woman going. ... She listened to Aberhart all the time. She listened to him when he was doing the religious stuff, so of course when he switched to politics she believed him. When I hear about the Aberhart landslide of 1935, I think of that log shack, and that woman, and that radio. (Gowan, *PI*)

Although radio drama may not have had the same influence as the religious and political broadcasts of William Aberhart, it did possess many attributes which Gowan holds dear. Somebody one said to her "radio drama [is] just a substitute for the real thing", (Gowan, *PI*) to which Gowan commented:

> Radio drama is as old as civilization itself, it goes back to the caveman telling stories at the campfire, the minstrel in the castle hall, the story told to a small room or to an individual. Not an imitation but a form of storytelling that is very very old. When you're writing for radio you always think of a solitary listener. I never think of myself as writing for a group because the number of people who listen in groups must be very small. It is a mind-to-mind thing. (Gowan, *PI*)

Although writing for stage was always Gowan's first love, she spent the greater portion of her writing career in the medium of radio. She stayed with radio because it was an avocation. She was never forced to write, but continued to do so because she enjoyed it. It was a medium which allowed her voice to be heard, and gave her the opportunity to explore her love of history, family, and community in a theatrical form much more quickly, and with less expense, than the stage. With radio, Gowan's plays were heard coast-to-coast, and in many areas of the world where she would not have otherwise have been heard. Although the stage version of *The Last Caveman* was toured by Sidney Risk's Everyman Theatre across half of Canada, it was heard by more people on a single evening in 1950 than the stage version reached during the entire tour. Gowan is uncertain about the power her plays had, and the valuable contribution she made to Canadian radio drama.

Concerning her involvement in the media, she commented, "I was just an unemployed school teacher putting over my points another way." (Gowan, *PI*) Her points were valid and important, and her way of taking an ordinary situation and making it sparkle was and is a gift. Alice Frick wrote to Gowan concerning the first play in *The Town Grows Up* series, called *The Story of the Town Waterworks*, and says, "I found the script exciting, even at the second reading and why you should be able to make me excited about Maplefield getting a waterworks, only God knows!" (Frick, *Letter*, Sept. 22, 1943) It was Gowan's gift, her contribution, to the golden age of radio.

Conclusion: A Final Perspective

The initial purpose of radio was to supersede the function of the telegraph: to send information from one location to another without the use of wires. Radio was, and still remains, first and foremost a business. When Reginald Fessenden broadcast his Christmas greetings to the radio operators aboard ships in the Atlantic he was not attempting to create a new form of entertainment; instead, he was showing he could improve on the business of radio. With Fessenden's system the slow and cumbersome dots and dashes of morse code messages could be replaced by a person speaking to another person. What Fessenden and his contemporaries did not realize was the impact that voice radio would have on people who were not associated with the various information services. The function of radio changed. It was still a business, but the job description altered to allow entertainment to become involved. Entertainment became more ingrained in the broadcast day as did advertising. Sponsors soon discovered radio as the perfect medium for reaching a vast audience quickly and cost efficiently. Ratings were developed to help guide the advertising dollar in the direction of the most listeners. Programmes changed in an effort to attract those listeners. The cycle of radio was established.

License fees were an important part of early radio. The new technology was not intended to be free, instead the

governing body of broadcasting, in order to supply a better product, required a fee to be paid by the listener. Many will argue the license fee did not heighten the quality of radio programmes, rather private broadcasters intent on attracting the largest share of the audience and the popular taste of that audience dictated the final product. In many ways radio became a function of the entertainment business.

When the emphasis was placed on entertainment, radio drama immediately became an important facet of the broadcasting industry. Dramas were used in a variety of ways for business purposes. Companies like Canadian National Railways installed radios in their trains to supply passengers with entertainment, including the *CNRV Players*, on cross-Canada excursions. Radio dramas were used to promote up-coming events like concerts and stage plays. Series, like *The Calgary Story*, were written to emphasize and promote individual companies. Motion pictures were often played in a condensed radio drama format with the original casts recreating their roles to promote both the film and its participants. Leading movie producers like Cecil B. Demille and many of Hollywood's leading actors and actresses applied their talents to this form of radio drama.

For the listener who had been newly introduced to the technology of radio it was an exciting time. Where before the family would have to travel, sometimes great distances, for entertainment the radio brought the entertainment to the home.

For many families the radio became the centre of the living room and through it many of Hollywood's best came to visit. Along with the numerous big-name stars who made regular appearances on the radio were many local participants who became famous within the range of the local radio signal.

It was at the local level that the business of radio drama altered slightly. Whereas many of the nationally produced dramas were intended to attract sponsorship, the local radio dramas were often produced and aired without sponsorship. Where the top entertainers in the United States commanded annual salaries often exceeding $50,000, the lead actors in Edmonton and Calgary barely surpassed $100 a season for their participation in radio drama[36]. It was more common at the local level to find radio drama participants conscious of the business but following more closely the prompting of the creative and artistic muse. Essentially Sheila Marryat, Elsie Park Gowan, Doug Homersham, and Clarence Mack, along with the numerous actors, technicians, operators, and writers who worked with them, helped to keep the pace of radio and radio drama in Alberta in line with the rest of the country.

Sheila Marryat felt that radio was a form of compensation for rural listeners who did not have immediate access to the arts. The need to bring the arts to the listeners was a motivating factor for Marryat to form *The CKUA Players*. Elsie

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[36] Based on a generous season of 14 performances at $7.50 for each performance. Most actors were not fortunate enough to perform in 14 performances in a season.

Park Gowan felt that what she did as a writer was more of an avocation than an occupation. She was a school teacher and a historian and brought a clearer focus of Canada and Canadians to her listeners. Clarence Mack and Doug Homersham often produced plays for little or no fee above their regular salary; for them radio was an opportunity to express themselves creatively. Through them a full range of styles were explored such as murder mysteries, Greek classics, locally written experimental, historical, comedies and more. Although they were very aware of the ratings, radio still offered a chance to experiment while supplying entertainment.

Radio drama in Alberta was a vibrant part of daily radio and an essential part of the local theatre scene from as early as 1929 through to the 1960s. Most radio stations in the province produced some form of radio drama: everything from short scripts produced for a specific occasion, like *The Story of a Sack of Potatoes* for Jenkins' Groceteria, to multi-week series like *Wednesday Night Playhouse*. Even after television began its climb to domination, radio was still an essential part of daily life for most Albertans.

Marryat, Gowan, Homersham and Mack helped to prove that radio still had much to offer even after the era of television began. Through their work, drama written and produced in Alberta became a viable product. There were other Alberta residents, such as Alice Frick and Tommy Tweed, who felt the prospect of staying and working in the province was not a

lofty enough goal. For them the major production studios of the CBC held the key to broadcasting freedom.

The three major production studios for the CBC were in Vancouver, Winnipeg and Toronto and it was through those studios that the standards for radio drama were set. At the forefront of the CBC producers was Andrew Allan. His work was heard on a weekly (and even daily) basis across the country and gave guidance to producers and actors alike. Allan was accessible to other producers in the country like Doug Homersham who travelled to Winnipeg for training under Allan for six months. The accessibility of the CBC, its product, and its people to local broadcast facilities helped to heighten the calibre of radio drama being produced in Alberta.

The distance to the main CBC facilities did not hamper the amount of drama produced in the province. Although much of it was only heard on local stations, there were productions which were shared with the entire country. The short lived *Chinook Playhouse* produced by Clarence Mack, and the dramas which were produced by Doug Homersham from the studios of CJCA are examples of programmes which were heard by a national audience. The goal of radio practitioners in Alberta was not necessarily to achieve national status although it was something they aspired to on occasion. It is the amount of work which was done on a local level which became testament to the commitment the local artists had to their craft as well as their listeners. The efforts of the local artists was well

rewarded, especially in the urban centres where the number of listeners to the local stations exceeded greatly the number of listeners to outside-of-province stations.

Even though there was a significant amount of locally produced drama in Alberta it was minimal when compared directly to the amount of drama which was being brought in from outside sources. With three national networks in the United States, a national network in Canada, as well as the local stations, radio enthusiasts in Alberta had a large number of programmes to choose from. Alberta-based stations carried programmes from the CBC as well as the three networks in the United States. For local radio artists, the implications of outside material being brought in meant producing a product which would attract listeners, not send them to another station or network. Because of the conscientious way in which radio programmers kept track of the ratings, each programme had to maintain standards equal to or greater than other programmes in order to stay on the air. Locally produced programmes were no exception to this rule. Station managers could very easily bring in nationally syndicated shows for about the same amount of money (and sometimes for less) than they could produce a show locally. Therefore, the quality of the locally produced show had to be able to compete with the nationally produced and syndicated programmes.

Radio drama in Alberta kept pace through the years with the national trends and in some cases led the field. Sheila

Marryat and the *CKUA Players* were among the first to explore historical and educational dramas in Canada. So polished was the product they produced that the CBC came to them when it was time to organize an Educational Division of the CBC. Many of the educational broadcast centres which followed were based on the quality and presentation of product found at CKUA. The reputation of the station has remained high from 1929 until today. It was also through CKUA that many of the well-known actors of radio and stage in Alberta honed their skills.

Much of the dedication and commitment to the locally produced radio product was developed through the amateur and little theatre movements in Edmonton and Calgary. In those organizations existed a group of people who believed in drama for the sake of the craft. Radio drama was beneficial for the stage actors for a variety of reasons, including the option of acting all year and the ability to reach an audience not otherwise accessible. Radio allowed drama enthusiasts to entertain thousands with a single broadcast. Under normal circumstances a radio broadcast aired once would reach more people than the entire run of a stage show, with far less expense. With the far reaching abilities of radio came certain responsibilities. The influential power of radio was demonstrated often by people like William Aberhart. For others, like Elsie Park Gowan who spent much of her radio writing career consciously or unconsciously using radio drama for the betterment of society, radio was first an entertain-

ment tool, and second a vehicle for education.

The audience that seemed most appreciative of radio drama and the other forms of entertainment were the rural listeners. For many rural Albertans radio truly was a window to the world. Radio brought entertainment, information, and companionship to a great many people. Radio was a business, but it was also an invaluable service. In the early 1920s, the management of CJCA recognized just how important the service of radio was, and

> in 1923...originated a unique program service, later to be copied by others. Its signal spilled over northern Alberta and most of the Northwest Territories, then incredibly isolated and sparsely populated. Beginning at midnight each Saturday, CJCA began a program titled simply "Hello the North". Each week it lasted as long as the material held out.
>
> The show carried messages from the wives and friends "on the outside" to trappers, flyers, missionaries, RCMP constables and other lonely sojourners in that vast expanse. (Allard, 53).

Although entertainment and information were available constantly from a number of sources, it was local programmes such as "Hello the North" which made radio real for many people. That particular program elicited the following verse from Bill McIlroy then working for the Hudson's Bay Co. at Chipewyan Lake. The poem was published in the *Peace River Record* March 31, 1927 and reads:

> When the wintry moon is shining,
> And it's forty five below,
> And you hike across the snow covered lake
> To hear the radio.
> You don't mind the chilly weather,
> You don't mind how deep the snow,
> You just try to grin and bear it

Till you reach "Friend Radio".
For you haven't had your mail from home,
For three long months, and more,
Can you blame one, getting sometimes peeved,
Or even, sometimes sore?
But at last you reach the radio
Then you hear something worth
And you stick it out, till half past twelve,
To get "News for the North"
You hear your message buzzing through,
"Your wife and kids are well"
You feel that life's worth living
Though you thought that it was hell.
You hear, "She got the mail you sent"
Then, you don't mind static squealing;
You've got what you were looking for
A grand and glorious feeling.
When a fellow has a wife and kids
Four hundred miles away
It just seems to bring them closer
Hearing from CJCA.

(*Peace River Record*, March 31, 1927).

In Alberta the function of radio came to mean supplying an essential service. Messages to loved ones, news of the world, and locally and nationally produced entertainments were available to the listener anywhere, any time. So important was the service, and so freely was it available, that listeners came to expect it. The recognition by the broadcast industry of just how essential the service was helped to keep the local producers, actors, technicians and writers actively involved in their craft for many years.

Radio changed from the simple beginnings of getting messages to ships quickly and efficiently, to the day when it was recognized as the most effective means of mass communication. Along the way was the acknowledgment that radio was a means of entertaining. The golden age of radio was indeed a golden time.

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Appendices

Appendix A
Elsie Park Gowan, Series Contributions

The following list is a compilation of series which Gowan either wrote all of the episodes or a minimum of fifty percent of the episodes. There are some series, such as *Famous Living Canadians*, where it is known Gowan wrote all of the episodes, but no information is available as to how many plays were written for the series. Each entry includes, where known, the series title, the number of episodes which Gowan contributed, the station(s) or network which broadcast the series and the broadcast dates.

The Series Titles

Altar of the Moon; 7; Western Network; 1941/01/08 - 1941/02/19
Barlows of Beaver Street; 34; CBC International Network; 1948/11/08 - 1949/06/27
Building of Canada; 10; CKUA, CFCN, CFRN; 1937/11/23 - 1938/01/25
Building of Canada; 10; CKUA, CBC; 1938/09/28 - 1939/02/08
Call To Health & Happiness; 4; Western Network; 1942/11/04 - 1942/11/25
Down Our Street; 6; Dominion Network; 1952/11/18 - 1952/12/23
Famous Living Canadians; ?; 1946 c.
Ferguson Family, The; 6; Dominion Network; 1954/01/26 - 1954/03/02
Heroes of Canada; ?; 1944 c.
Hopeful Side, The; 3; 1946/04/02 - 1946/04/30
Judge for Yourself; 6; Dominion Network; 1955/03/28 - 1955/05/02
Lands of the Free; 5; NBC Inter-University; 1943/04/04 - 1943/05/02
New Lamps for Old; 5; CKUA; 1937/01/c. - 1937/05/c.
New Lamps for Old; 5; CKUA, CBC Western; 1937/11/19 - ?
People Next Door, The; 19; Trans-Canada Network; 1944/11/03 - 1945/03/02
People Next Door, The; 17; Trans-Canada Network; 1945/11/05 - 1946/01/28

Plays of Our Province; ?; CKUA, CFCN, CFRN; 1940/02/12 - ?
These Are My Neighbours; 19; CJCA, CFRN; 1943
This is Our Heritage; ?; Trans-Canada Network; 1955
This is Our Story; 10; 1946 c.
Town Grows Up, The; 16; CBC National Network; 1943/11/12 - 1944/02/25

Appendix B

Elsie Park Gowan Radio Play Titles

The following list is a compilation of radio plays written by Elsie Park Gowan between 1936 and 1967. Gowan was most prolific from 1936 to 1955. The 228 entries in this list include 189 individual play titles as well as 39 titles of plays which received more than one production. It has been estimated that Gowan wrote approximately 250 radio plays over a 20 year period (1936 to 1956). This is a safe estimate when one recognizes that the 189 titles in this list is incomplete. It is known, for example, that Gowan wrote 34 episodes for the *Barlows of Beaver Street* of which 16 titles were found for this compilation. There are other similar examples in existence.

Complete information was not located each entry. Where possible the listings include the play title, the name of the series (if applicable) in which the play appeared, the name of the station(s) or network on which the play was broadcast, the date of the broadcast, and the producer of the play. Information which was not available (as is the case with many of the producers) is left blank. Where the exact broadcast date is not known as much information about the broadcast time is given. In some cases the date included is only an estimation of the year.

This list has been compiled from a variety of sources

including: Anton Wagner's "Elsie Park Gowan: Distinctively Canadian", Howard Fink's *Canadian National Theatre on the Air, 1925-1961*, the *Elsie Park Gowan Scrapbook*, the *Elsie Park Gowan Personal Papers*, the *CFAC Papers*, broadcast schedules, and newspaper listings. This list has been arranged in chronological order by broadcast date.

The Plays

Coming of Power; New Lamps for Old; CKUA, CBC Western; 1936-1937; Sheila Marryat

Elizabeth Fry; New Lamps for Old; CKUA, CBC Western; 1936-1937; Sheila Marryat

Erasmus of Rotterdam; New Lamps for Old; CKUA, CBC Western; 1936-1937; Sheila Marryat

Mary Wollstonecraft; New Lamps for Old; CKUA, CBC Western; 1936-1937; Sheila Marryat

New Napoleon; New Lamps for Old; CKUA, CBC Western; 1936-1937; Sheila Marryat

Story of Radium; New Lamps for Old; CKUA, CBC Western; 1936-1937; Sheila Marryat

Visions in Stone; New Lamps for Old; CKUA, CBC Western; 1936-1937; Sheila Marryat

The Dragon from the Sea; Building of Canada; CKUA, CFRN, CFCN, CBC; 1937; Sheila Marryat

Frontenac, the Fighting Governor; Building of Canada; CKUA, CFRN, CFCN, CBC; 1937; Sheila Marryat

He Was No Gentleman; Building of Canada; CKUA, CFRN, CFCN, CBC; 1937; Sheila Marryat

Kings of Acadia; Building of Canada; CKUA, CFRN, CFCN, CBC; 1937; Sheila Marryat

On This Rock; Building of Canada; CKUA, CFRN, CFCN, CBC; 1937; Sheila Marryat

Raleigh; Prophet of Empire; Building of Canada; CKUA, CFRN, CFCN, CBC; 1937/11; Sheila Marryat

Silver Chief; Building of Canada; CKUA, CFRN, CFCN, CBC; 1937/12/28; Sheila Marryat

The Argonauts; Building of Canada; CKUA, CFRN, CFCN, CBC; 1938; Sheila Marryat

Grenville's Sword; Building of Canada; CKUA, CFRN, CFCN, CBC; 1938; Sheila Marryat

No More Heroes; Building of Canada; CKUA, CFRN, CFCN, CBC; 1938; Sheila Marryat

The Price of Loyalty; Building of Canada; CKUA, CFRN, CFCN, CBC; 1938; Sheila Marryat

Red Star in the West; Building of Canada; CKUA, CFRN, CFCN, CBC; 1938; Sheila Marryat

Saddle and Plow; Building of Canada; CKUA, CFRN, CFCN, CBC; 1938; Sheila Marryat

The Figurehead; Building of Canada; CKUA, CFRN, CFCN, CBC; 1938/01/18; Sheila Marryat

From Sea to Sea; Building of Canada; CKUA, CFRN, CFCN, CBC; 1938/01/18; Sheila Marryat

Seven Oaks; Building of Canada; CKUA, CFRN, CFCN, CBC; 1938/10/28; Sheila Marryat

Patriots of '37; Building of Canada; CKUA, CFRN, CFCN, CBC; 1938/11; Sheila Marryat

Radical Jack; Building of Canada; CKUA, CFRN, CFCN, CBC; 1938/11; Sheila Marryat

Under One Flag; Building of Canada; CKUA, CFRN, CFCN, CBC; 1938/11/09; Sheila Marryat

The Eagle of Oregon; Building of Canada; CKUA, CFRN, CFCN, CBC; 1938/12/28; Sheila Marryat

North to Eldorado; Proud Procession; 1939 c.

Enter the Marquis; Winnipeg Drama; Western Network; 1939/07/03

Clementine Steps In; Winnipeg Drama; Western Network; 1940 c.; Charles Wright

Greater Magic; CBC; 1940 c.

Indians in Paris; Theatre Time; Western Network; 1940/03/20; Andrew Allan

Printing, Messenger of Life; CJCA, CKUA; 1940/06/19

Raleigh, Prophet of Empire; Theatre Time; Pacific Network; 1940/06/24; Andrew Allan

The Pirate of Peace River; Theatre Time; Pacific Network; 1940/07/29; Andrew Allan

The Hungry Spirit; Theatre Time; Western Network; 1940/08/26; Andrew Allan

The Governor Works Fast; CBC; 1940/09/21

St. Paul's of London; Theatre Time; Pacific Network; 1940/10/14; Andrew Allan

Time - And the Conways; * 15 min. preview *; CJCA; 1940/11 c.

Shakespeare and Spikie McGinnis; * 15 min. preview *; CJCA; 1941/01/05

Back to the Kitchen, Woman!; CBC Ottawa Workshop; Eastern Network; 1941/01/16; Robert Edmonds

The Men in the News; Western Network; 1941/03/12

Souvenir for Suzanne; Theatre Time; Western Network; 1941/03/26; Andrew Allan

Garibaldi Remembers; Theatre Time; Western Network; 1941/05/06; Andrew Allan

Appointment With Yesterday; Drama; Western Network; 1941/08/12; Andrew Allan

Family Reunion; Theatre Time; Western Network; 1941/09/09; Andrew Allan

The Eagle of Oregon; Theatre Time; Western Network; 1941/11/18; Andrew Allan

Cancer of the Skin; Call to Health and Happiness; 1942

Elgin the Figurehead; Birth of Canadian Freedom; 1942
Laura Valadon; Call to Health and Happiness; CKUA; 1942; Elsie Park Gowan
The Wheat Hunters; 1942
When Freedom Was a Dream; Birth of Canadian Freedom; National Network; 1942/01/14; James R. Finlay
Radical Jack; Birth of Canadian Freedom; National Network; 1942/02/11; James R. Finlay
Laura Valadon; Call to Health and Happiness; CKUA; 1942/04/28; Elsie Park Gowan
Maestro; Theatre Time; Western Network; 1942/04/28; Andrew Allan
The Story of George Leonidas; Call to Health and Happiness; CKUA; 1942/05/05; Elsie Park Gowan
The Story of Jim Haskins, Farmer; Call to Health and Happiness; CKUA; 1942/05/12; Elsie Park Gowan
Four Weapons Against Death; Call to Health and Happiness; CKUA; 1942/05/19; Elsie Park Gowan
Ladies in Retirement; * 15 min. preview *; CJCA; 1942/07 c.
Strong and the Free; Montreal Drama; National Network; 1942/09/30; Rupert Caplan
Laura Valadon; Call to Health and Happiness; Western Network; 1942/11/04; Andrew Allan
The Story of George Leonidas; Call to Health and Happiness; Western Network; 1942/11/11; Andrew Allan
The Story of Jim Haskins, Farmer; Call to Health and Happiness; Western Network; 1942/11/18; Andrew Allan
Four Weapons Against Death; Call to Health and Happiness; Western Network; 1942/11/25; Andrew Allan
Lake of Gold; Tales From Far and Near; CBS-CBC School of the Air; 1942/12/10
Ann Grierson and the Bogeyman; These Are My Neighbours; CJCA, CFRN; 1943
The Case of the Unofficial Parents; These Are My Neighbours; CJCA, CFRN; 1943
The Story of Steve Barclay; These Are My Neighbours; CJCA, CFRN; 1943
The Princess Who Dreamed Too Much; 1943 c.
The Adventure in Liberty; Town Grows Up; CBC National Network; 1943-1944
Gentleman with Bright Buttons; The Town Grows Up; CBC National Network; 1943-1944
Low Rent Housing (sub.); *The Town Grows Up;* CBC National Network; 1943-1944
Mystery Story; The Town Grows Up; CBC National Network; 1943-1944
Out of the Shadows; The Town Grows Up; CBC National Network; 1943-1944
Ramparts for Mary Jane; The Town Grows Up; CBC National Network; 1943-1944
Six Cents for a Mule; The Town Grows Up; CBC National Network; 1943-1944

Social Security (sub.); *The Town Grows Up*; CBC National Network; 1943-1944
Frank Oliver - A Pushing, Fighting...; *Heroes of Canada*; National Network; 1943/01/15
Silver and Quicksilver; *Lands of the Free*; NBC Inter-American University; 1943/01/18; Rupert Caplan
We Couldn't Leave Dinah; *Tales From Far and Near*; CBS-CBC School of the Air; 1943/01/28
North After Seals; *Tales from Far and Near*; CBS-CBC School of the Air; 1943/03/11; R. J. Finlay
Canada Comes of Age; *Lands of the Free*; NBC Inter-American University; 1943/04/11; Rupert Caplan
The Clipper Ship; *Lands of the Free*; NBC Inter-American University; 1943/04/11; Rupert Caplan
They Came Bearing Gifts; *Lands of the Free*; NBC Inter-American University; 1943/04/18; Rupert Caplan
The Road to Alaska; *Lands of the Free*; NBC Inter-American University; 1943/04/25; Rupert Caplan
Canada the Refuge; *Lands of the Free*; NBC Inter-American University; 1943/05/02; Rupert Caplan
The Slide for Life; *Cancer Series*; CBC (Homemakers); 1943/05/05
The Blue Light; *Cancer Series*; CBC (Homemakers); 1943/05/12
Choose to Live; *Cancer Series*; CBC (Homemakers); 1943/05/19
Weapons Against Death; *Cancer Series*; CBC (Homemakers); 1943/05/26
Love Story; *Montreal Playhouse*; National Network; 1943/08/09; Rupert Caplan
Love Story; *Friday Drama Spot*; Pacific Network; 1943/08/20; Andrew Allan
How Big is Edmonton; *Community Chest*; CJCA, CFRN; 1943/09/12
The Story of the Town Water Works; *The Town Grows Up*; CBC National Network; 1943/11/12
Communication; *The Town Grows Up*; CBC National Network; 1943/11/19
Police Protection; *The Town Grows Up*; CBC National Network; 1943/12/03
This Is Tomorrow; *The Town Grows Up*; CBC National Network; 1943/12/17
Time For What; *The Town Grows Up*; CBC National Network; 1943/12/31
The Brides from Britain; *The People Next Door*; Trans-Canada Network; 1944-1945; Kay Stevenson
Little Girl Lost; *The People Next Door*; Trans-Canada Network; 1944-1945; Kay Stevenson
Navy Girl; *The People Next Door*; Trans-Canada Network; 1944-1945; Kay Stevenson
Target for Tomorrow; *The People Next Door*; Trans-Canada Network; 1944-1945; Kay Stevenson
Transplanting Theresa; *The People Next Door*; Trans-Canada Network; 1944-1945; Kay Stevenson
Invitation to Lunch; *The Town Grows Up*; CBC National Network;

1944/01/14

A Book of Memory; The Town Grows Up; CBC National Network; 1944/01/28

Unemployment (sub.); *The Town Grows Up;* CBC National Network; 1944/02/18

Jack Barlow Comes Home; The People Next Door; Trans-Canada Network; 1944/03/02; Kay Stevenson

Strong and the Free; Montreal Drama; Trans-Canada Network; 1944/07/14; George Robertson

The Case of the Unofficial Parents; The People Next Door; Trans-Canada Network; 1944/11/17; Kay Stevenson

Ann Grierson and the Bogeyman; The People Next Door; Trans-Canada Network; 1944/11/24; Kay Stevenson

The Case of the Doubtful Bride; The People Next Door; Trans-Canada Network; 1944/12/15; Kay Stevenson

The Case of the Unemployed Heart; The People Next Door; Trans-Canada Network; 1944/12/22; Kay Stevenson

Case of the House Divided; The People Next Door; Trans-Canada Network; 1944/12/29; Kay Stevenson

Edmonton - Gateway to the North; CBC National School Broadcasts; 1945-1946

Shakespeare was Eighteen; The People Next Door; Trans-Canada Network; 1945/01/19; Kay Stevenson

Explorers of the Dawn; CBC National School Broadcasts; 1945/03/16

Mary is a Person, Sergeant; The People Next Door; Trans-Canada Network; 1945/11/05; Kay Stevenson

She's Nobody's Baby Now; The People Next Door; Trans-Canada Network; 1945/11/12; Kay Stevenson

Unemployed Commando; The People Next Door; Trans-Canada Network; 1945/11/19; Kay Stevenson

Books After Battle; The People Next Door; Trans-Canada Network; 1945/11/26; Kay Stevenson

Marriage is for Adults Only; The People Next Door; Trans-Canada Network; 1945/12/03; Kay Stevenson

Flier Without Wings; The People Next Door; Trans-Canada Network; 1945/12/10; Kay Stevenson

Well, How You've Grown!; The People Next Door; Trans-Canada Network; 1945/12/17; Kay Stevenson

Down to Earth...With a Parachute; The People Next Door; Trans-Canada Network; 1945/12/24; Kay Stevenson

Hasty Postwar Marriages; The People Next Door; Trans-Canada Network; 1945/12/31; Kay Stevenson

Janey's Last Chance; The People Next Door; Trans-Canada Network; 1945/12/31; Kay Stevenson

Breeches from Bond Street; This is Our Story; CJCA, CBC, 1946; Doug Homersham

The Harbour of the Air; This is Our Story; CJCA, CBC; 1946; Doug Homersham

Home Town ... 1946; This is Our Story; CJCA, CBC; 1946; Doug Homersham

Laura Valadon; The Hopeful Side; 1946

Sister in the Grey Gown; This is Our Story; CJCA, CBC; 1946; Doug Homersham

Home Town 1946; Summer Fallow; Trans-Canada Network; 1946 c.; R. S. James

One Who Looks at the Stars; CJCA, CBC Western; 1946 c.

Bad Boy; The People Next Door; Trans-Canada Network; 1946/01/07; Kay Stevenson

Memo from an Editor to His son; The People Next Door; Trans-Canada Network; 1946/01/14; Kay Stevenson

Latchkeys and Old Lace; The People Next Door; Trans-Canada Network; 1946/01/21; Kay Stevenson

Whistle Blows for Mother; The People Next Door; Trans-Canada Network; 1946/01/28; Kay Stevenson

The Day Will Come; Birth of Canadian Freedom; National Network; 1946/02/11; James R. Finlay

A Valentine To A Western Lady; Panorama; Trans-Canada Network; 1946/02/14

The Courting of Marie Jenvrin; Radio Repertory; Trans-Canada Network; 1946/04/04; Rupert Caplan

George Leonidas and His Indigestion; The Hopeful Side; 1946/04/16; Estelle Fox

Laura Valadon; The Hopeful Side; 1946/04/23; Estelle Fox

Cancer of the Skin; The Hopeful Side; 1946/04/30; Estelle Fox

Bump on a Log; Vancouver Theatre; Trans-Canada Network; 1946/10/17; Mavor Moore

Lift Up the Towers; CJCA, CBC; 1947/04/26; Doug Homersham

A Story for November; CJCA; 1947/11 c.; Doug Homersham

Alexander Mackenzie (sub.); CBC National School Broadcasts; 1948-1949

Bump on a Log; Vancouver Theatre; Trans-Canada Network; 1948/07/08; Doug Nixon

Easter Bonnet; Barlows of Beaver Street; CBC International Network; 1949/03/22; Raymond Whitehouse

Accent on Johnny; Barlows of Beaver Street; CBC International Network; 1949/04/12; Raymond Whitehouse

The Plow and the Second Hand Cars; Barlows of Beaver Street; CBC International Network; 1949/04/19; Raymond Whitehouse

Land of Milk and Honey; Barlows of Beaver Street; CBC International Network; 1949/04/26; Raymond Whitehouse

Susie Says the Good Word; Barlows of Beaver Street; CBC International Network; 1949/05/03; Raymond Whitehouse

Gladys and the Great Outdoors; Barlows of Beaver Street; CBC International Network; 1949/05/10; Raymond Whitehouse

Operation Asparagus; Barlows of Beaver Street; CBC International Network; 1949/05/24; Raymond Whitehouse

Lazy by the Lake; Barlows of Beaver Street; CBC International Network; 1949/05/31; Raymond Whitehouse

Touch Nata Single Bough; Barlows of Beaver Street; CBC International Network; 1949/06/07; Raymond Whitehouse

A Mind of Her Own; Barlows of Beaver Street; CBC International Network; 1949/06/14; Raymond Whitehouse

What Price Penelope?; Barlows of Beaver Street; CBC Interna-

tional Network; 1949/06/28; Raymond Whitehouse
Week-End in Lower Five; Barlows of Beaver Street; CBC International Network; 1949/07/05; Raymond Whitehouse
Characters; Barlows of Beaver Street; CBC International Network; 1949/07/12; Raymond Whitehouse
The Question of a House; Barlows of Beaver Street; CBC International Network; 1949/07/19; Raymond Whitehouse
The Question of a Holiday; Barlows of Beaver Street; CBC International Network; 1949/07/26; Raymond Whitehouse
Highway Going Home; Barlows of Beaver Street; CBC International Network; 1949/08/30; Raymond Whitehouse
Steamboat Bill and the Pirate; On Stage; CBC International Network; 1949/10/31; Raymond Whitehouse
The Gateway; In Search of Citizens; Dominion Network; 1949/11/29; Esse W. Ljungh
World on Her Doorstep; Summer Fallow; Trans-Canada Network; 1950 c.
I Was There...With the Cariboo Miners; CBC National School Broadcasts; 1950/02/10
Breeches from Bond Street; Curtain Time; Dominion Network; 1950/04/05; Andrew Allan
Search for Martin Carlisle; In Search of Ourselves; Dominion Network; 1950/04/25; Esse W. Ljungh
The Last Caveman; CBC Stage; Trans-Canada Network; 1950/05/07; Andrew Allan
John Lundberg - Advocate of the People; Summer Fallow; Trans-Canada Network; 1950/07/31; Peter Whittal
Klondyke Gold; CBC National School Broadcasts; 1950/10 c.
Young Bush Pilot; CBC National School Broadcasts; 1950/10/20
The Pirate of Peace River; Fall Fare; Trans-Canada Network; 1950/10/27; Robert Allen
Oil Empire in the West; Cross Section; Dominion Network; 1951/03/29
What About Oil; Cross Section; Dominion Network; 1951/03/29; Arthur Hillar
The Gateway; In Search of Citizens; Dominion Network; 1951/04/24; Esse W. Ljungh
Appointment With Yesterday; Vancouver Theatre; Trans-Canada Network; 1951/09/28; Robert Allen
British Columbia is Born; CBC National School Broadcasts; 1952/01/25
Bump on a Log; CFAC Radio Workshop; CFAC; 1952/03/26; Clarence Mack
Breeches From Bond Street; CFAC Radio Workshop; CFAC; 1952/05/07; Clarence Mack
Shaped Like a Question Mark; Books Alive; School Broadcasts; 1952/11/07
The Ghost of Grandma Fraser; Down Our Street Today; Dominion Network; 1952/11/18; Esse W. Ljungh
Thirty Minutes Past Noon; Down Our Street Today; Dominion Network; 1952/11/25; Esse W. Ljungh
The High Green Gate; Down Our Street Today; Dominion Network;

1952/12/02; Esse W. Ljungh

The Reluctant King Wenceslaus; Down Our Street Today; Dominion Network; 1952/12/09; Esse W. Ljungh

Curfew Shall Not Ring; Down Our Street Today; Dominion Network; 1952/12/14; Esse W. Ljungh

Sister Bridget and the Tramp; Down Our Street Today; Dominion Network; 1952/12/23; Esse W. Ljungh

A Fight On Our Hands; Books Alive; School Broadcasts; 1953/01/16

This Land for My Sons; Western Gateways; School Broadcasts; 1953/02/07

The Courting of Marie Jenvrin; Prairie Playhouse; Eastern Network; 1953/02/26; Emrys Jones

The Pirate of Peace River; CFAC Wednesday Night Playhouse; CFAC; 1953/03/18; Clarence Mack

Breeches from Bond Street; Prairie Playhouse; Eastern Network; 1953/03/26; Emrys Jones

A Branch of Rosemary; Special Broadcast; CBC School Broadcasts; 1953/04/30; F. E. Laight

Bump on a Log; Prairie Playhouse; Eastern Network; 1953/06/11; Emrys Jones

Maestro in Spite of Himself; Prairie Playhouse; Eastern Network; 1953/08/27; Emrys Jones

Shaped Like a Question Mark; Adventure With Books; Alberta Schools Broadcasts; 1953/11/07

Hudson's Bay Trader; I Was There; 1954/01/28

Want to Go Hunting; Adventure With Books; Alberta Schools Broadcasts; 1954/01/29

Frank's Story; Ferguson Family; Dominion Network; 1954/02/02; Esse W. Ljungh

Maestro In Spite of Himself; CFAC Wednesday Night Playhouse; CFAC; 1954/02/10; Clarence Mack

June's Story; Ferguson Family; Dominion Network; 1954/02/16; Esse W. Ljungh

Johnny's Story; Ferguson Family; Dominion Network; 1954/02/23; Esse W. Ljungh

The Pirate of Peace River; Halifax Theatre; Eastern Network; 1954/05/18; Robert Alban

Home Town 1954; Summer Fallow; Trans-Canada Network; 1954/07/26; R. S. James

The Unquiet Spirit; Saturday Playhouse; Trans-Canada Network; 1954/08/14; Raymond Whitehouse

Glorious Journey; Working Together; 1954/12/07; F. E. Laight

The Pirate of Peace River; Halifax Theatre; Eastern Network; 1954/12/28; Robert Alban

A Handful of Wheat; This is Our Heritage; 1955

Thirty Minutes Past Noon; CFAC Wednesday Night Playhouse; CFAC; 1955/03/16; Clarence Mack

This I Know; As Children See Us; Dominion Network; 1955/03/21; Esse W. Ljungh

The Man Who Ran Away; Judge for Yourself; Dominion Network; 1955/03/28; Esse W. Ljungh

The Second Son; Judge for Yourself; Dominion Network; 1955/04/04; Esse W. Ljungh

From Lillian - Without Love; Judge for Yourself; Dominion Network; 1955/04/11; Esse W. Ljungh

The Girl From a Good Home; Judge for Yourself; Dominion Network; 1955/04/18; Esse W. Ljungh

The Unquiet Spirit; CFAC Wednesday Night Playhouse; CFAC; 1955/04/20; Clarence Mack

The Facts of the Case; Judge for Yourself; Dominion Network; 1955/04/25; Esse W. Ljungh

To Break the Chain; Judge for Yourself; Dominion Network; 1955/05/02; Esse W. Ljungh

Burning Their Bridges Behind Them; Halifax Theatre; Eastern Network; 1956/01/17; Hector MacFadyen

This I Know; As Children See Us; Dominion Network; 1956/01/23; Esse W. Ljungh

Alexander Mackenzie (sub.); CBC National School Broadcasts; 1957

The Unquiet Spirit; Pacific Playhouse; Trans-Canada Network; 1957/09/01; Neil Sutherland

Maestro in Spite of Himself; Prairie Playhouse; Eastern Network; 1959/05/07; Gustaf Kristjanson

The Blue Heron; Prairie Playhouse; Eastern Network; 1959/06/25; Gustaf Kristjanson

This Land for My Sons; Summer Fallow; Trans-Canada Network; 1959/10/19; R. S. James

Journey with Louisa; CJCA; 1963 c.; Doug Homersham

The Man in the News; CBR Playhouse; 1967/03/04